Volume 2 • Issue 12 • November 1997

PS Extreme

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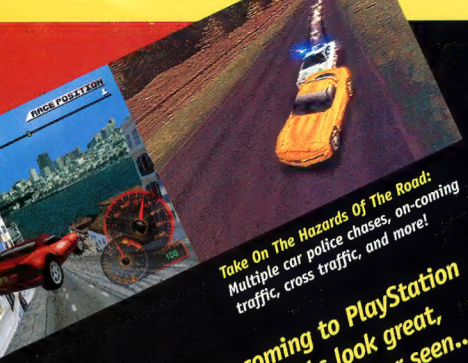

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VOLUME 2 • ISSUE 12
NOVEMBER 1997

SO, DAVE...

EDITORIAL

TELL US WHAT YOU REALLY THINK

IN THE EXTREME

EXNEWS: Page 12
PlayStation numbers skyrocket, Jeff Gordon gives his blessing to a new NASCAR title, FFVII draws crowds and Beth gets a makeover.

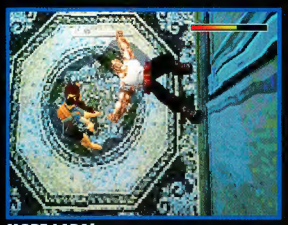
EXECUTE: Page 20
Are you in a cheatin' mood? Hope so, 'cause we got codes up the yinger!

EXCLUSIVE: Page 32
Come take a look with us at Single Trac's next big action title for the PSX, the underwater wonder, Critical Depth!

EXPECTING: Page 34
Twenty one games previewed! Ooohhh, that's really nifty! Obviously, the 4th quarter avalanche is upon us!

EXTREME: Page 54
Please remember to keep your hands and eyes inside the magazine at all times. Next stop... Cortex Mines.

EXRATED: Page 58
It's time again to inform you, our favorite readers, of just what we think about the current offering of PlayStation games... Yes, even Golden Nugget!!



MORE LARA!
Pg. 35

MORE GEKKO!
Pg. 47

The holiday flood o' games has begun! In this very issue, that you now hold in your hands, there are 23 games reviewed, and another 21 or so that we are previewing — all either currently shipping to retail or about to. Of course, the big one for this issue is the game featured on our cover — Crash Bandicoot 2: Cortex Strikes Back.

It has been a little over a year since we first interviewed Universal's Mark Cerny and Naughty Dog's Jason Rubin, and since we first played the original Crash Bandicoot. While a couple hundred different games have shipped for the PlayStation during this period, only recently have competing developers been able to begin to catch the Crash team, in terms of graphics presentation and technology. While playing the original game with my seven year old, a few days ago, I was taken aback at just how beautiful the first Crash is. It had been a number of months since I had played the game and the detail and quality of Crash's world came back and impressed me all over again. How many times has this happened to you in your personal video game history? Most games age so quickly, technology-wise, that I often find myself thinking; "Geesh... I actually thought THAT was good?" And here was a game that not only looked great, but still had graphics better than any game that has reached the marketplace through August, 1997 — and development began on Crash back in 1995!

While much has been made of the original Crash Bandicoot not being a "true 3D" game, I think that the sales and critical success of the game speaks for itself. While many point to Mario 64 as the defining next-generation action/platform title, for my tastes, it's Crash. Why? My reasons include graphic variety, the quantity of levels, superior music, better color and texture and more straight-ahead gameplay. While I am a fan of the Mario series, I found that Mario 64 couldn't sustain my interest long enough for me to want to beat the game in a "perfect" fashion — Crash did. With Mario, I quickly found many repeating textures, objects and enemies, while Crash introduced new backgrounds, textures, objects and enemies with far more regularity. In addition, I have found that many younger gamers, my son and his friends included, have a hard time with the go-anywhere environment found in Mario 64. With Crash, they could pick-up the controller and go — they may not have been successful in finding all of the game's gems, depth and subtleties... but they felt like they were succeeding.

This brings me to 1997 and Crash 2. Like all good sequels, it has more of everything, with tremedous variety — and the game is instantly accessible to most gamers, while being difficult to beat. I think Mark, Jason and the entire Crash 2 team have turned the heat up and look to have made a game for the ages — take a look at our EXtreme feature and see if you agree...

Dave

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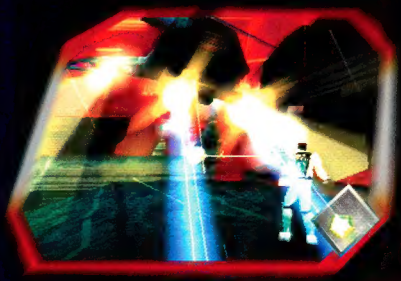

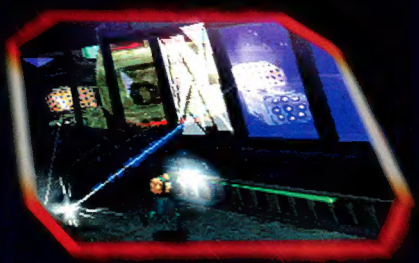

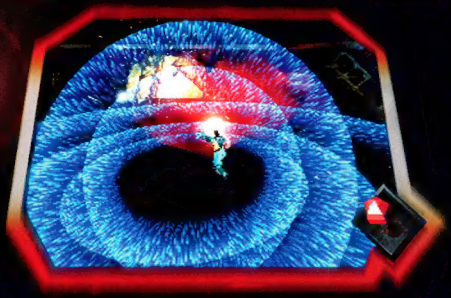

ONE MAN. ONE SOLUTION. ONE STATE OF MIND.

TEEN T AGES 13+ CONTENT RATED BY ESRB

PlayStation™

NOVEMBER 1997

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Dear PSExtreme,

I have been subscribing to PSExtreme for about 6 months now, and thoroughly enjoy your articles and reviews. My oldest daughter anxiously awaits each monthly issue. We have always found your reviews compatible with our tastes, and so for that reason, when we see you give a game a 99% rating, we're down at the store buying that game without delay. Well, with Final Fantasy VII, you severely disappointed us. The graphics are certainly amazing as you point out, but the story line leaves much to be desired. I am embarrassed, offended, and even angry, and I'm only about four hours into the game.

The September issue reviewer, Zach, inappropriately toned down the story line. While he describes it as a group of "rebels" fighting a power company that rules the world, the game itself immediately describes them as "terrorists." There is a big difference between these words. The founding fathers of our country might be described as rebels, but certainly not terrorists. And whenever these "rebels" board a train, common folk run away afraid of them and describe them as thugs. At one point, one of the heroes (Barrett) actually hits a man minding his own business on the train. In such a setting, they depict misfit gang members as one might find in a New York Subway. I don't want anything encouraging my daughter to join a gang or to plant bombs in federal buildings. These are very real temptations to many teens these days in their frustration with corrupted authority and government oppression. Just consider the Oklahoma City bombing as an extreme example of the problem. When the story line of Final Fantasy VII describes the great amount of innocent life lost by their bombing of a reactor, what is that going to do but encourage a sympathetic ear toward the Oklahoma City bomber, the Unibomber, and the Arab terrorists bombing public busses in Israel. Look at the huge amount of graffiti (gang signatures) and increase in teen violence, vandalism, and other crimes, and the temptation for teens to join gangs is all too clear. Final Fantasy VII depicts foul-mouthed thugs and terrorists who kill and hurt innocent people as heroes, and I find something very wrong with that, especially for my children. Even the options available for Cloud's responses to characters are either apathetic or outright rude. Where are the positive or at least more tactful responses that a truly good hero might give? In my opinion, Cloud is an apathetic selfish loser with no brains. Who wants to role play him?

Now that's just the story line. Although your reviewer complimented the game for tackling "such sophisticated topics as prostitution and mass murder," he NEVER mentioned anything about foul language. The game is filled with it, and not by the enemy at all, but by the heroes! I looked at the game rating on the back label, and it warned only about violence, nothing else. I think my daughter can handle the violence just fine, but the constant "damn's" and "shit's" and "ass" and "the hell you doing's" is too much for my taste, much less my daughter. We don't talk like that, and my daughter shows obvious signs of embarrassment and tries to get such dialogue off the screen as quickly as she can. Someone somewhere, either in your review, or on the CD cover itself, should have alerted us to the overuse of foul language that simply deepens the story line image that heroes are foul-mouthed cussing terrorists who defy authority and make their own rules in life. Certainly for a role playing game, where the story line is the heart of the game, don't you think these are important issues for including in a review?

If I could return my game and get a refund, I would. I feel gypped by Squaresoft, Sony, and PSExtreme for endorsing this product so fervently. You will probably say that this is a FANTASY game so I should not take it so seriously, but how enjoyable is the fantasy if I can't put myself in the role of being these thugs? I hope you print my dissenting letter so that other moral citizens who are concerned for their children and for decency in society will have some kind of warning about what Final Fantasy VII is really all about. In my opinion, it is a definite DO NOT BUY.

David Miller,
Tampa, Florida.

The censorship of Final Fantasy VII was a huge controversy. Squaresoft and Sony were flooded with demands that they not change one bit of the storyline from the Japanese version, and they didn't. Zach reviewed the game as an adult male and, although you are correct in your point that he should have made reference to the offensive language, he represents the core market that Sony is trying to attract with FFVII. The issues that you addressed are very real in our society and certainly no condoned by the people at PSExtreme and Dimension Publishing. If you would like more information about FFVII's rating, please call the ESRB at 1-800-771-3772. They are the people who rated the game. We will make sure that your letter is forwarded to Sony.

Dear PSExtreme,

I really like your magazine, and use your articles and reviews to make my decisions on game purchases.

I have been playing NFL Gameday 98 for about a month now, it is definitely the best football I have ever played. The controls are very tight, the polygon players move like real people, and it has to be the first time the spin move actually did something other than slow you down. With all this greatness, why am I still bugged? Well I've seen the new John Madden Football, it looks the same, but a little better than last year. They've added some moves for the players, like a swim move a la Gday, the field gets torn up if you're on grass, early season play may place you on the baseball teams midfield dirt,and other dressings like these have been added. However Madden still has one thing that I think Gday must get in the near future (next year, obviously), and that is a TV style presentation. Now I know this may be icing on an already tasty cake, but Madden has built up a huge following, so even a mediocre game is going to sell well because John Madden has his face and name all over the packaging and inside the game.

Now, I must say in all fairness that I have not played Madden, but only watched in the store. I just don't see how a sprite based game can come near the control of Gday's polys. I fear that if Madden for the PlayStation goes to polygons, which they may be forced to do next year, then the Madden folks who switched over to Gday may jump right back.

There has to be many broadcast teams we could tap for Gday game calling and color commentary.How about the ESPN team? Joe Theisman and his partner, at the half go back to the studio with Chris Berman. That would be great. If it's Jim Lampley, who did call some AFC games last season, I'm out the window. What about Al, Frank, and Dan? I bet they would love the exposure, except Frank, he gets plenty on his own.

Thanks,
John Dayton
New Market, MD

Dude, we couldn't agree with you more — if GameDay 99 gets the TV-style presentation, the game will be untouchable.

Dear PSExtreme,

I would like to start off by saying that your magazine rules. I wait every month for each new issue to arrive at my house. It's very well laid out and so easy to understand that even a Nintendo owner could follow it. Below I have listed some ways in which you can improve on your mag to make it even more brilliant. I also have listed a few questions that I have.

Improvements

1. You should make a table of contents that lists all of the games previewed or reviewed in that issue in alphabetical order. When I am looking for a certain game, I have to search through the whole thing until I find it. A table of contents would help a lot.
2. More letters and mail should be included. I like to hear other people's opinions on games and the last few issues have had only a few letters.
3. More codes.
4. A section dedicated to RPGs.
5. A poster included in every issue.

Questions

1. What is up with this PlayStation Type C? When is it coming out? Is there going to be an adapter that you can plug into your PlayStation?
2. Will the Justifier work with Time Crisis?
3. Is there an Earthworm Jim coming out for the PlayStation?

Thanks for reading and I hope to see this letter in an issue sometime soon.

Sincerely,
Chris Thompson

Improvements:
Alright people, let's hear from y'all on this one, should we take his advice? Do you have other suggestions? Write us and let us know!
Answers:

1. *Whatever you've read in other magazines is nothing more than hearsay and speculation. To this date, Sony denies any such upgrades or add-ons for their machine exist.*
2. *No. Only Namco's GunCon works with Time Crisis and no others.*
3. *Earthworm Jim 2 was released in Europe for the PlayStation, but didn't make it to these shores. Interplay is considering releasing Earthworm Jim 3 for the PlayStation sometime next year.*

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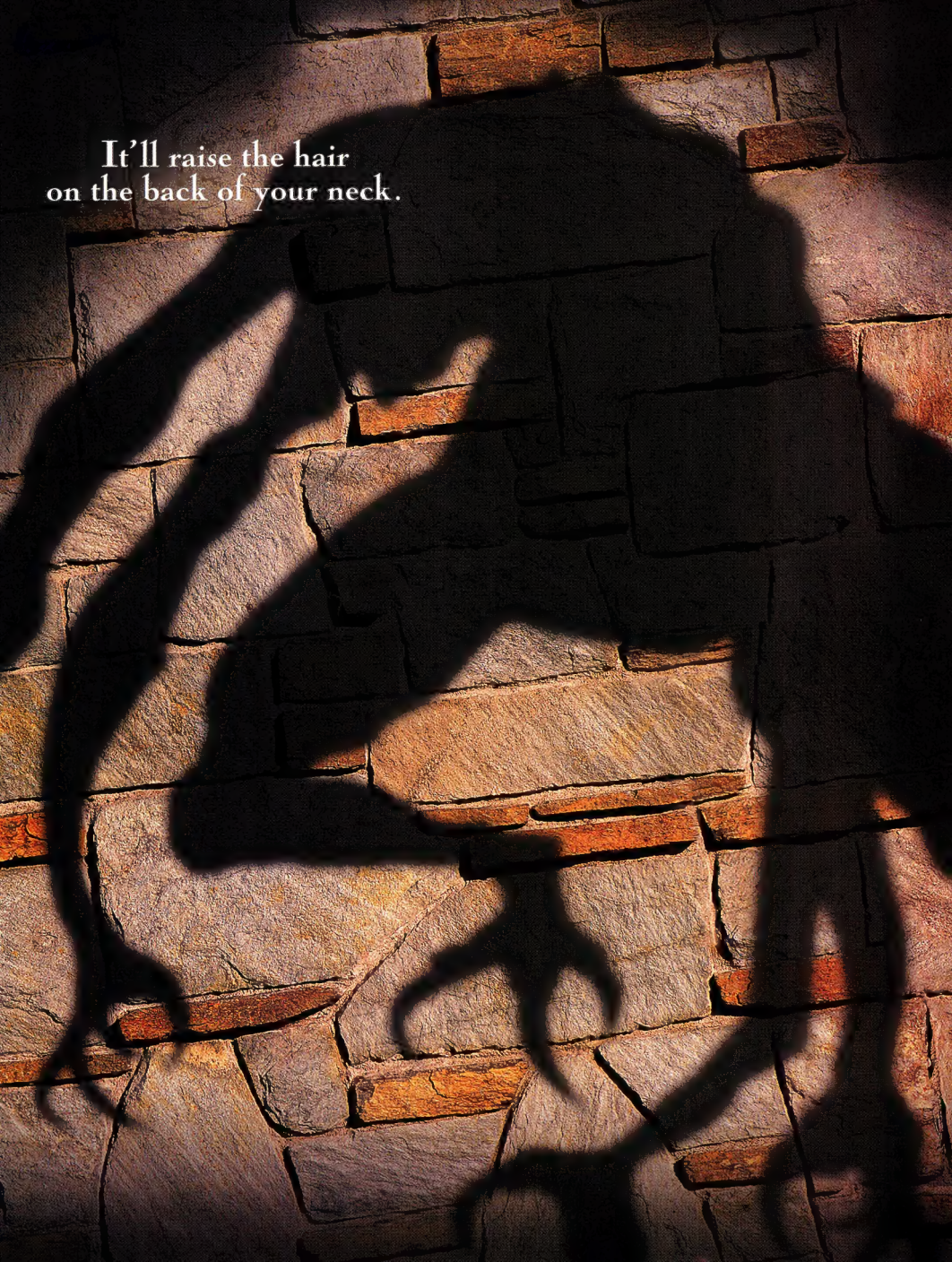
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That is, if you still have one.
ACTIVISION

PlayStation Gaming News
From Around The Globe

20 MILLION AND COUNTING

On August 20, Sony announced that they have manufactured over 20 million PlayStations across the big blue marble known as Earth. In Japan, they've cranked out 8.5 million units, in North American, 6.4 million units, and in Europe, 5.1 million units. (8.5 + 6.4 + 5.1 = 20, for the mathematically challenged amongst you.) Sony also announced software sales figures: 70 million in Japan, 35 million in North America, and 30 million in Europe. Which leads us to say: damn, that's an awful lot. Kaz Hirai, chief operating officer of Sony Computer Entertainment America, said "As of July 31, PlayStation has sold through 4.3 million units in North America. PlayStation is the undisputed leader in the next generation console category and is widening its gap over the competition. With a broad line-up of long awaited titles such as Final Fantasy VII and NFL GameDay 98, coming this fall at affordable prices, PlayStation is set to dominate the category during 1997 and beyond."

JEFF GORDON AND ASC GAMES IN ENDORSEMENT LOVEFEST

ASC Games has signed NASCAR stud boy and current Winston Cup points leader Jeff Gordon to a multi-year deal in which the 26-year-old phenom will co-design and co-produce the games with his moniker plastered onto them. The first Gordon-endorsed product is scheduled to ship in the fourth quarter of 1998, but that's the only detail known just yet.

Said ASC Games President and COO, David Klein, "This project is much more than a racing game with a celebrity endorsement. When you combine Jeff's racing expertise with his passion for video games, especially racing games, he becomes much more than just a great name, he becomes a great asset to the development team. Jeff's hands-on involvement and personal touch will help capture a level of excitement that will make this racing series something very special for fans of racing video games."

Added Gordon in a not-at-all-prepared statement, "Being in a video game is a great opportunity and a lot of fun, but to actually work directly with ASC Games to co-produce my own video game is a whole new experience that I'm really looking forward to. I have always been a big video game fan and have wanted to do a project like this for a long time. I'm excited about bringing my sport to a generation of video game fans who will soon become the next generation of racing fans."

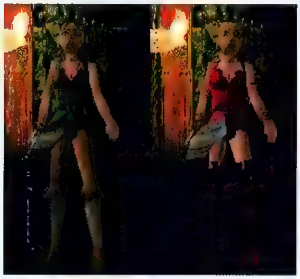
IF YOU BUILD IT, THEY WILL COME

On September 9th, Sony Computer Entertainment America announced that their much-anticipated role playing game, Final Fantasy VII (99%/Platinum/September '97 PSExtreme), had sold-through more than 330,000 copies in its debut weekend. The game generated $16.5 million in retail sales during this time period, making it a bigger financial story than the best of Hollywood for that weekend (Universal's G.I. Jane was the number one grossing film at $11.1 million for the Labor Day weekend). According to our sources, these sales figures are better than the cumulative sell-through for the last Final Fantasy game for the Super Nintendo Entertainment System (in North America) — making Sony's numbers even more impressive as the SNES installed base was over 15 million, compared to the PlayStation's current base of approximately 6 million. SCEA has hit the print media and television with a huge advertising campaign that is aimed at keeping FFVII in consumers' minds well through the holiday season — expect the game to continue to make news well into the new year.

BLONDES HAVE MORE FUN (AND MORE CHANCE OF BEING APPROVED BY SONY)

Excalibur 2555 A.D. is an action/adventure originally released in the European market by the British developer Telstar, and picked up for U.S. distribution by Sir-tech. But what flies with our brethren across the pond doesn't necessarily fly with Sony Computer Entertainment of America, who "requested" several changes to the game before they'd give the green light. Sir-tech's Luis Salazar explains it thusly: "[Sony] winks at you and suggests stuff. We could have gotten it approved as is, but in the best interests of the game, we decided to do what they suggested." Among the minor improvements: a revised opening CG animation sequence (with subtitles to explain what the hell's going on) and a new title screen. But the major change is shown in our screen shot below. Beth, the game's protagonist, has been transformed from Dowdy Spice to a Lara Croft wanna-be. From head to toe:

- Brown hair? Too dowdy. Make 'er blond!
- Green shirt? Too earthy. Make it fire-engine red!
- Bare arms? Too droll. Give 'er armbands!
- Pants and socks? Too practical. Make 'em thigh-high boots! Show us some leg, baby!



EX NEWS

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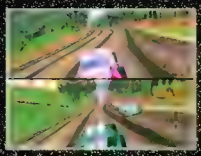
You love playing San Francisco Rush in the arcades. Well, now you can race through the streets of the Bay Area in the comfort of your



own living room. In fact, you'll be able to choose from six different tracks three more than in the arcade version. Each one showing

authentic San Francisco landscapes and so many places to catch air that you might be mistaken for an unidentified flying object. And if that's

not enough, you can take shortcuts through open fields and underground sewers. You can soar over building tops or be catapulted into the

San Francisco RUSH
EXTREME RACING

DESIGNED FOR N64 RUMBLE PAK™

air from a dismantled freeway overpass. It's San Francisco Rush. And lucky for you it's coming home in a more manageable size.

MIDWAY

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Start zooming in.

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- An arsenal of unique and twisted weapons including bombs, grenades, homing missiles, parachutes, and much more.
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TEEN
AGES 13+
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...UNTIL YOU SEE THE GREENS OF THEIR EYES.

Keep going.

Ahh. Bullets or homing grenades?

Homing grenades.

IT THINKS. THEREFORE IT KILLS.

COMING TO PLAYSTATION™ GAME CONSOLE THIS NOVEMBER.

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PLAYMATES INTERACTIVE ENTERTAINMENT PIE

PlayStation Gaming News
From Around The Globe

TOP 10 BEST SELLING PLAYSTATION TITLES RANKED ON UNIT SALES JULY, 1997

1 last month 1

Triple Play 98
EA
average retail price $44

2 last month 4

Twisted Metal 2
Sony
average retail price $41

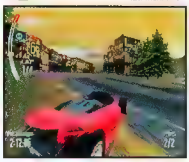
3 last month **

Jampack Volume I
Sony
average retail price $5

4 last month 2

Wild Arms
Sony
average retail price $44

5 last month 3

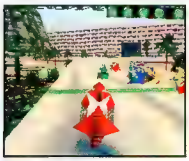


Need for Speed II
EA
average retail price $48

6 last month 6

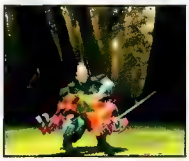
Twisted Metal
Sony
average retail price $21

7 last month 8



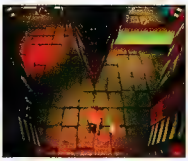
Jet Moto
Sony
average retail price $41

8 last month **



Tekken 2
Namco
average retail price $47

9 last month 9



Crash Bandicoot
Sony
average retail price $42

10 last month 7

WCW vs the World
T*HQ
average retail price $48

Source. NPD TRSTS Video Games Tracking Service • 9,100 outlets across the U S
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The ratings reflected above are those of Dimension Publishing and do not represent the opinions of NPD TRSTS

** Not in Top 10 Last Month

EX NEWS

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Figure 3–3
Signs and symptoms of shock

FACE – PALE, DAZED LOOK
EYES – DULL, LACKLUSTER
PUPILS – DILATED
RESPIRATION – SHALLOW, LABORED, IRREGULAR
PULSE – RAPID, WEAK
SKIN – COLD, CLAMMY
PERSON MAY BE ANXIOUS, OR PARTIALLY OR TOTALLY UNCONSCIOUS, DISORIENTED

Dazed look? Dilated pupils? Rapid pulse? It's simply the body's way of protecting itself against games like Deathtrap Dungeon, Tomb Raider 2 and Fighting Force. And while the victims of this kind of emotional shock may benefit from counseling or psychotherapy, what they usually need is more playing time.

EIDOS

INTERACTIVE

You've been warned.

www.eidosinteractive.com

SEND US YOUR CODES AND WIN BIG PRIZES!

Each month we'll pick the best code sent in by our loyal and intelligent readers and send that person a brand spankin' new copy of ASCII's hot new Drivin' Destruction game for the PlayStation, Felony 11-79, or, if fighting's your thing, ASCII's SpecialisedStick (you decide). But wait! That's not all, if you ask now, we'll also include ASCII's super stylish ASCII Grip one handed controller for the PlayStation for your controlling pleasure, PLUS twelve (12) free issues of the best, the first, monthly dedicated PlayStation magazine, PSExtreme, of course! Whoa! That's a lot of cool stuff for just a code, what are you waiting for?

WE HAVE A WINNER!

Congratulations and thanks again go to this month's winner, Duane "The Codemaster" Bash of Albuquerque, NM. Duane, you truly are the Code Master! You won August's contest with those awesome codes for WarGods, now you're back (in style) with some great codes for:

The Lost World

To access the galleries or character with extra lives, enter any of the following passwords at the PASSWORD entry screen:

Compy Gallery
△ ■ ✕ ● ■ ✕ △ ● ■ ■ ● △

Raptor Gallery
△ ■ ✕ ● ■ ✕ ● ■ ● ✕ △ ✕

Hunter Gallery
■ ■ ● ● ■ ● ● ● ■ ● ■ ●

T-Rex Gallery
■ ✕ ● ■ ✕ △ ■ ✕ ● △ ● ✕

Prey Gallery
● △ △ △ ● ● ■ ■ ■ ■ ✕ ✕

Compy w/93 lives
■ △ ● △ △ ✕ ● △ ✕ ✕ ● △ ■

Raptor w/93 lives
✕ ✕ ■ △ △ ● ■ ✕ △ △ ■ ✕

Hunter w/92 lives
■ ✕ ● △ ■ ● ■ ✕ ● △ ■ ●

T-Rex w/98 lives
✕ ✕ ● ● ■ ✕ ■ ■ ● ■ ● ✕

Human Prey w/76 lives
✕ ● ■ ● ✕ ● ■ ✕ ■ ● ✕ ●

CONTEST RULES: Anyone of any age can enter. The only people not eligible to win are employees of Dimension Publishing or ASCII Entertainment, their friends, family, pets and anyone they talk to or know of. Dimension Publishing reserves the right to make any and all decisions regarding the contest. One winner per month will be chosen, at Dimension Publishing's discretion, based on the code or trick supplied by the entrant. If you win but do not specify, in your code submission, which prize you want to receive (Felony 11-79 or an ASCII SpecialisedStick), then we will choose for you.

Thunder Truck Rally

BIG TRUCK: At the main menu, press L1, R2, L2, R1, ↑. You hear a burping sound effect (pleasant!). Start the race and enjoy your big new truck.

FAST TRUCK: At the main menu, press L2, ←, →, ↑, ↓, R1. Once again, the belch indicates the cheat is active. You are now driving one freakishly fast automobile.

NO DAMAGE: At the main menu, press ←, ←, ←, ←, ↑, ↓, L1, R2.

Ace Combat 2

LISTEN TO THE TUNAGE: Beat the game with a rank higher than First Lieutenant and you can mess around with a music player at the option screen, listening to the game's 28 selections. Press L1 or L2 to skip ahead a track, R1 or R2 to skip back a track, SELECT to toggle the screen, and ■ (or ● or ✕) to exit.

LOCK THE VIEWPOINT: During a replay, press and hold the "Map" button.

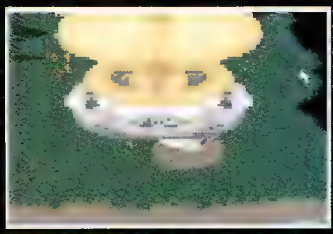
CHANGE MISSION MAP VIEW: On the mission selection screen, put the cursor on MISSION and press SELECT to toggle between three angles.

Buster Brothers

EXTRA STAGES: In Buster Buddies, press ✕ on Controllers 1 and 2 at the same time to start a NORMAL game. This gives you access to an additional ten stages.

LEVEL SELECT: In Super Buster Bros. and Buster Buddies, press ↓ + ● to start a NORMAL game.

Command & Conquer



INFINITE MONEY: First, press START. Then, at an easy pace, hit →, ↓, ↓, ←, L1, ←, →, ↓, ←. This code works in all modes of play. You'll get 5,000 credits each time you enter the code. You can enter it as many times as you like.

Code supplied by Kyle Steavenson

NUCLEAR BOMB: At any time during a normal game, press START to pause, then enter →↓←←↓→→←↓●↑✕. When you unpause, you'll have access to Nuclear Bomb.

Code supplied by Donna Damanafshan

Tenka

ALL THE WEAPONS: Pause the game, hold L1, and press △, R1, △, ■, R1, ●, ■, ■.

LEVEL SKIP: Pause the game, hold L2, and press ●, ●, ■, △, R1, ■, △, ●. Release L2 to engage the warp, Cap'n.

Time Crisis

EASY MODE: Start the game and shoot the far-left box for the regular mission. Two boxes

Take to the streets with the Eidos Fighting Force Promo

FIGHTING FORCE

FIVE FIRST PRIZES
- A dual analog Barracuda gamepad for the PlayStation
- Fighting Force Strategy Guide

ONE GRAND PRIZE
- Fighting Force - the game!
- Fighting Force t-shirt
- A Fighting Force standee and Strategy Guide
- Dual analog Barracuda gamepad for the PlayStation

TEN SECOND PRIZES
- Fighting Force poster
- Fighting Force t-shirt

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1. No purchase necessary. To enter, send a standard size postcard containing name, address, phone number and e-mail address to "Fighting Force/PS Xtreme promo", EIDOS Interactive, 651 Brannan Street, 4th Floor, San Francisco, CA 94107. No purchase or payment of any money is necessary to enter. One entry per household. Mechanically reproduced entries will not be accepted. Entries must be received by December 5, 1997. All entries become exclusive property of EIDOS Interactive and will not be acknowledged or returned. Only one prize per family, organization, or household. 2. Prizes: One Grand Prize: One Grand Prize: a copy of Fighting Force for the PlayStation, a Fighting Force standee, strategy guide, and t-shirt, a dual analog Barracuda gamepad for the PlayStation, and a one year subscription to PS Xtreme. Five First Prizes: a dual analog Barracuda gamepad for the PlayStation, a Fighting Force Strategy guide and a one year subscription to PS Xtreme. Ten Second Prizes: a Fighting poster and t-shirt. Winners will be determined by a random drawing from all valid entries by EIDOS Interactive whose decisions are final. Drawing will be held on or about January 15, 1998. All prizes will be awarded. Prize(s) are non-transferable. No substitutions are allowed, except at the option of EIDOS Interactive should the featured prize(s) become unavailable. The odds of winning will be determined by number of valid entries received. 3. Eligibility: Promotion open to residents of United States and Canada. Non-compliance with the time parameters contained herein or return of any prize/prize notification as undeliverable will result in disqualification and an alternate winner will be selected. In the event of disqualification, Grand Prize, First Prizes, and Second Prizes will be awarded to the next available entry. Runner-up winners will be notified by mail. By acceptance, winner(s) agree to the use of their name and/or likeness for purposes of advertising, trade, or promotion without further compensation, unless prohibited by law. EIDOS Interactive/sponsors are not responsible for any damages, taxes, or expense that consumers might incur as a result of this contest or receipt of prize. Winners accepting prize(s) agree that all prize(s) are awarded on the condition that EIDOS Interactive/sponsors and their agents, representatives, and employees will have no liability whatsoever for any injuries, losses or damages of any kind resulting from acceptance, possession, or use of the prize(s). 4. List of winners: For a list of winners, send a self-addressed stamped envelope to Fighting Force/PS Xtreme promo, 651 Brannan Street, 4th Floor, San Francisco, CA 94107. Requests for winners must be received by January 15, 1998. Allow 4 weeks for delivery of winners list. 5. Restrictions: Void where prohibited or restricted by law. All federal, state and local regulations apply. 6. Sponsors: This promotion is sponsored by EIDOS Interactive, Interact Accessories, Prima Publishing and PS Xtreme. EIDOS Interactive and Fighting Force are trademarks of EIDOS plc. ©1997 EIDOS. Barracuda is a trademark of Interact Accessories. ©1997 Interact. PS Xtreme is a trademark of Dimension Publishing. ©1997 Dimension Publishing.

CORE

PRIMA

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"TOASTERS LIKE THIS DON'T COME WITH NEW CHECKING ACCOUNTS."

MACE DANIELS

IN A GAME WHERE JUST ABOUT ANYTHING CAN BECOME A WEAPON, IT'S NICE TO KNOW YOU CAN STILL FIND A GOOD OL' BAZOOKA.

HERE, THE INNER CITY STREETS ARE LITTERED WITH WEAPONS OF ALL SORTS. SOME OF YOUR OWN MAKING. OTHERS READY-MADE AND **BANNED** IN MOST STATES.

ALL PROVIDE ENDLESS HOURS OF EXPLOSIONS, GUNFIRE, AND MISERY OF THE HIGHEST QUALITY. NO WONDER THIS CITY NEVER SLEEPS.

EIDOS INTERACTIVE

You've been warned.

CORE

www.fightingforce.com

appear. Shoot off-screen and the word "EASY" appears in the large box. Shoot it to play with more life.

CHEAT MENU: Shoot once in the center of the R in "Crisis," then shoot twice in the center of the crosshairs. Secret cheat menu time!

Porsche Challenge

At the main menu, enter the following codes:

USER CAR JUMPS: Press ■, ●, ■, ●. (Makes 1st and 2nd player's cars ramp into the air off little hills).

ALL CARS JUMP: Press and hold ↑, then ■, ●, ■, ●, ■, ●, ■. (Makes all cars in a championship jump.)

HIGH VOICES: Press ↑, ▲, ↑, ▲. (Makes all players talk like Mickey Mouse.)

HYPER CAR: Press and hold SELECT, press ■ and while still holding SELECT, press and hold ●, then press and hold ■.

Code supplied by Jeff Hambleton (not the Chief!)

Clock Tower

SEMI-WALKTHROUGH: This isn't a step-by-step guide, but it does break down how to solve the puzzles and see all the endings of this spooky-spooky game. Thank you, ASCII Entertainment, for the cribbage of your guide!

PROLOGUE

1. Examine the bed and the scissors and leave the Treatment Room.
2. Talk to Beth twice. Examine the Devil Statue, the rubber mask and Harris' desk (in the far corner). Talk to Danny twice. Leave the Office into the hall.
3. Talk to Harris. Crucial choice time: Talk to him only once if you want the game's heroine to be Helen, and (at least) twice if you want the heroine to be Jennifer. Use the elevator and go down to the first floor. Walk right and conduct an interview with Nolan. Return to the office when you're done.
4. Examine the Devil Statue and talk to Harris. Remember who you choose to examine the Statue; this is crucial for getting the best ending. Enter the Treatment Room.
5. Talk to Kay and Edward.

GOTTS AT RICK'S HOUSE

1. Go upstairs to the Living Room and take the Devil Statue from the table, then examine the picture on the wall for the location of Barrows Castle.
2. Go downstairs to the Laundry Room and take the Detergent from the shelf on the wall.
3. Go outside to the patio and throw the Detergent at the dog.

HELEN AT BARROWS CASTLE (PART 1)

1. Go to the Drawing Room and check the vase beneath where the picture fell off the wall for the Mansion Key.
2. Go to the Restroom and find Beth. Talk to her twice to make her stay.
3. Go to the Kitchen and meet Harris, who gives you the Fireplace Key.
4. Go to the Storehouse and examine the floor, then examine the left shelf to find a switch that opens the door to the Wine Cellar. Enter the Cellar, look around, and leave. After the sound startles, look around to find Tim. Talk to him twice.
5. Go the Servant's Room and take the Cooper Book from the bed. Examine the desk and defeat the Hand, then check the desk again to take the Tattered Note with info about the fireplace in the Bedroom.
6. Go upstairs to the Bedroom and examine the newspaper between the beds. Examine the corner of the room the rat ran into three times to find a Key to the Study.
7. Go downstairs and open the big gate, then go to the Storeroom under the stairs. Open the coffin to find Nolan. Then open the chest to get the Lead Ball. Take the Batteries from the tape recorder on the floor.
8. Return upstairs to the Bedroom and check the fireplace with the Flashlight to find the Note with the Door Spell.

HELEN AT BARROWS CASTLE (PART 2)

9. Go through the Study to the Library. Get the Wooden Box from the top of the bookshelf. Return to the Study and throw the Wooden Box into the fireplace for the Cosmetic Key.
10. Return to the Library and look at the scratch marks on the ground. Use the Copper Book on the bookshelf to open the passage.
11. In the room with the three wells, drop the Lead Balls down the wells to find the dry well. Go down the dry well to find Gotts.
12. When you find Gotts, talk to him until he gives you the Pistol.
13. Go to the Main Hall and use the Pistol to shoot the padlock off the door to the Chapel.
14. Go into the Chapel and shoot the Scissorman with the Pistol when he appears.
15. Follow the Scissorman into the Torture Room and talk to Barton.
16. After Barton dies, go upstairs to the Living Room and unlock the fireplace with the Fireplace Key and enter the fireplace.
17. After entering the fireplace, you come out in the Priest's Room. In that room, use the Cosmetic Key to open the box on the desk and you get the Map.
18. Return to the Courtyard and examine the tree to the right of the fountain. This opens a valve that drains the fountain and opens the passage to the Underground.
19. When you enter the Underground, Scissorman reveals his true identity. Put the Devil Statue into the hole to kill Scissorman.

HELEN AT LIBRARY

1. Talk to Edward in the Stock Room.
2. Enter the Chief Librarian's Room and talk to him for the Key to the Reading Room.
3. Enter the Reading Room and use the stepladder to get the book on the top shelf.
4. Read the book and leave the room. The Chief Librarian gets killed by the clock, and you have to avoid the Scissorman.
5. Avoid Mr. Psycho and go into the Chief Librarian's Room. Search the desk several times for a Key to the Collection Room.
6. Enter the Collection Room and light the room by clicking on the fishtank. Collect the Devil Statue from the table.
7. Go upstairs to the Machine Room and escape the Scissorman again.
8. Go to the Office behind the reception desk and rescue Edward from under the desk.
9. You automatically go to the Reading Room and hide Edward under the desk. Check the vent next to the door.
10. Return to the Office and get the Screwdriver for the desk.
11. Return to the Reading Room and open the vent with the Screwdriver so Edward can escape.
12. Return to the Stock Room.

HELEN AT UNIVERSITY LAB

1. In the Bedroom, talk to Rose twice, then turn off the lights and climb into bed. Open the door when you hear knocking and evade the Scissorman.
2. Go to the Computer Room on the 3rd floor and take the Pliers from the toolbox on the desk.
3. Go to the Student Office Room on the 2nd floor and take the Flashlight from the locker.
4. Go to the Security Room on the 1st floor and take the Storage Key from the table.
5. Go to the Box Room on the 1st floor and use the Pliers on the door that's been wired shut, then use the Storage Key on the door.

JENNIFER AT BARROWS CASTLE (PART 1)

1. Enter the Church Library and take the Note from the right bookshelf.

4 A.M., TALLAHASSEE, FL—

TWO DRUNKS BATTLE IT OUT DOWN THE HALL. THE 38 EXPRESS SQUEALS TO A HALT EVERY HALF HOUR ON THE STREET BELOW. SLEEP DOESN'T COME EASY IN ROOM 23. BUT FOR 19 YEAR-OLD RAY COOPER, IT HAS NOTHING TO DO WITH THE NOISE. AS HE SAYS, "IT'S BECAUSE EVERY TIME I CLOSE MY EYES, ALL I SEE IS LARA CROFT."

PC CD

PlayStation

CORE

inset photos

Top: The Second Coming, slated for this fall. **Bottom:** Preparing for her return.

EIDOS

INTERACTIVE

You've been warned.

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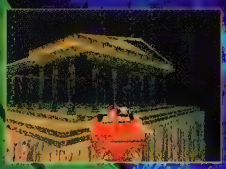
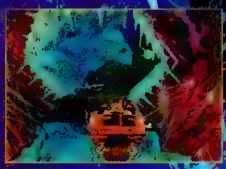
KISS THE ABYSS

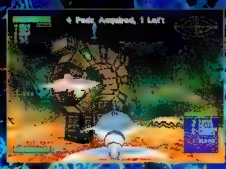


IMPLOSIVE REAL TIME 3D GRAPHICS

DEEP SEA MULTI-PLAYER GAME MODES



10 TOTALLY DIFFERENT HULL-CRUSHING ENVIRONMENTS



PIRANHA SWARMS, MAGNETIC SUCKERS, DEPTH CHARGES AND MORE!

This is what they really mean when they talk

about totally immersive gameplay. Take a dip in

these sub-infested waters for a spot of nuclear

fishin'. 12 subaquatic psychos want to send you

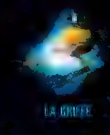
down and they've got the torpedoes to prove it.

Don't worry, you'll know you're in too deep

when the water pressure caves your head in.

Looks like you're in deep, kinp.

FROM THE DEVELOPERS OF TWISTED METAL™ JET MOTO™ AND WARHAWK!



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GAME SHARK Codez

Welcome to the Game Shark section. Each month we'll list the newest and coolest codes right here for your cheat'n pleasure. Warning: These codes won't work without a Game Shark.
For the latest codes and info, get on the internet and check www.gameshark.com, www.htc.net/~brian1/gscoo/index.html or www.datel.co.uk. If you find a code doesn't work, you may need to upgrade your Game Shark. Check your instruction manual for details.

NOTE: THESE CODES WERE MADE USING VERSION 1.99 NOT TESTED WITH DISC 2 OR 3.
FINAL FANTASY VII:
AP (AFTER EVERY BATTLE INCREASED BY 65,000)...8003D7DC 07FF
ANY MATERIA FOR CLOUD.....8009C778 00??
(REPLACE ?? WITH ANY NUMBER FROM 00-5A FOR DIFFERENT STUFF. (YOU CAN UNEQUIP THE MATERIA FROM CLOUD AND STORE IN YOUR INVENTORY OR EQUIP IT TO ANOTHER MEMBER OF YOUR PARTY.)
ANY ITEM.....8009CBE8 00??
(1 CAN BE CHANGED TO INCREASE THE NUMBER OF ITEMS)

QUANTITY	DIGITS TO ACCOMPANY ITEM SELECT:
001.	01 POTION	04C.	98	057.	CROSS SCYTHE
002.	X POTION	04D.	99	058.	BOOMERANG
003.	ETHER	04E.	9A	059.	WORMHOLE
004.	ETHER TURBO	04F.	11	05A.	CRESCENT MOON RING
005.	ELIXIR	070.	12	05B.	SAMU ARM
006.	LAST ELIXIR	071.	13	05C.	CRYSTAL CROSS
007.	PHOENIX TAIL	072.	14	05D.	WIND KILLER
008.	POISON NEUTRALIZER	073.	15	05E.	TWIN VIPER
009.	GOLD NEEDLE	074.	16	05F.	MAGIC SHURIKEN
00A.	VIRGIN'S KISS	075.	17	060.	SUPER BALL
00B.	(SCRIBE NO SCROLLS)	076.	18	061.	FUMA SHURIKEN
00C.	(YARASHIKEMONO)	077.	19	062.	RISING SUN
00D.	STIMULANT	078.	1D	063.	(KARI 2)
00E.	TRANQUILIZER	079.	1E	064.	IRRECONCILABLE
00F.	ALKALINITY MEDICINE	07A.	1F	065.	YELLOW MEGAPHONE
010.	SILENT SMOKE	07B.	23	066.	GREEN MEGAPHONE
011.	SPEED DRINK	07C.	24	067.	BLUE MEGAPHONE
012.	(EZ X NO KUSURI)	07D.	25	068.	RED MEGAPHONE
013.	VACCINE	07E.	26	069.	CRYSTAL MEGAPHONE
014.	(SHUNTSAN)	07F.	27	06A.	WHITE MEGAPHONE
015.	BOMB FRAGMENT	080.	28	06B.	BLACK MEGAPHONE
016.	RIGHT ARM BOMB	081.	MITHRIL HAMER	06C.	SILVER MEGAPHONE
017.	GOLD MICROGLASS	082.	HARD BREAKER	06D.	(KOU EN)
018.	CREATE GOD'S EDGE	083.	GUTSYBLADE	06E.	GOLD MEGAPHONE
019.	SPIDER THREAD	084.	ENHANCE SWORD	06F.	(TOUJU X KAPPA)
01A.	GREEN FUNGUS	085.	(GOD)	070.	STARLIGHT FORCE
01B.	SILENT MASK	086.	CRYSTAL SWORD	071.	MARVELOUS CHEER
01C.	BATTLE SOUND	087.	FORCE BASTER	072.	QUICKSILVER
01D.	DELUSION MARKI WEED	088.	RUNE BLADE	073.	SUPER
01E.	FIRE DRAGON FANG	089.	MIRAGE	074.	LAUNCH
01F.	FIRE SCROLL	08A.	HAZI- NAY	075.	RAIATTO
020.	ASFARIAN'S WIND	08B.	(KIRI I SYURICHIKOU)	076.	WINCHESTER
021.	COLD BINDING CRYSTAL	08C.	APOCALYPSE	077.	PEACEMAKER
022.	ELEC SHOCK BIND ROBE	08D.	(TOU NO SANKOU)	078.	RAPTORLIM
023.	FAST THUNDER	08E.	KAGARON	079.	LONGBARREL RIFLE
024.	EARTH DRUM	08F.	ULTIMA WEAPON	07A.	SILVER JEWEL GUN
025.	EARTH HAMMER	090.	LEATHER GLOVE	07B.	SNIPER CR
026.	HANDFLOWER MATERIAL	091.	METAL KNUCKLE	07C.	HIGHNOON ST
027.	MOLBOL'S TENTACLE	092.	MITHRIL CLAW	07D.	OUTSIDER
028.	SAND STAR	093.	GRAND GLOVE	07E.	DEATH PENALTY
029.	VAMPIRE FANG	094.	TIGER FANG	07F.	HAZANNONE
02A.	GHOST HAND	095.	DAIA KNUCKLE	080.	BRONZE HANDLE
02B.	BASILISK'S NAIL	096.	DRAGON CLAW	081.	IRON HANDLE
02C.	LIGHT CURTAIN	097.	CRYSTAL GLOVE	082.	TITANIUM HANDLE
02D.	NOON CURTAIN	098.	DRAGON SHIELD	083.	MITHRIL BRACELET
02E.	REFLECTION MIRROR	099.	PLASTRON FIST	084.	CARBON HANDLE
02F.	HOLY TORCH	09A.	KAISER BRACELET	085.	COPPER BRACELET
030.	BIG BIND FEATHER	09B.	ARMY COTTON GLOVES	086.	GOLD BRACELET
031.	SEA DRAGON SCALE	09C.	(WORLD / HEAD) VENOM	087.	DAIA HANDLE
032.	(MOTU NO MAYAKU)	09D.	MASTER FIST	088.	CRYSTAL HANDLE
033.	SHORTEN	09E.	SUPER FIST	089.	PLATINUM HANDLE
034.	EVE MEDICINE	09F.	PREMIUM HEART	08A.	RUNE BRACELET
035.	FIRE COCKTAIL	0A0.	GAUNTLET EDGE	08B.	(KIRIGOROSU)
036.	S MINE	0A1.	ASSAULT GUN	08C.	WIZARD ARACE
037.	(03) HELL BULLETS	0A2.	(SHOUGEKIJU)	08D.	ADAMANT HANDLE
038.	GRAVITY BALL	0A3.	HYDRIC SCISSOR	08E.	GIGAS BRACELET
039.	SPACE-TIME BULLET	0A4.	HARD VULCAN	08F.	IMPERIAL ARMS
03A.	(KASUMI)	0A5.	CRUSHSAW	090.	ARGIS BRACELET
03B.	HUNDREDTH NUMBER	0A6.	(KOUGEKI NAGOU	091.	FORCE BRACE
03C.	FANG OF DRAGON FAIR	0A7.	A. R. CANNON	092.	WARRIOR HANDLE
03D.	HYDE'S CAULDRON	0A8.	DOUBLE MACHINE GUN	093.	MEGAERG DEFENSE TOOL
03E.	SHINSHIKU VEGETABLE	0A9.	DRILL ARM	094.	ARMOR DEFEND TOOL
03F.	KEIGON VEGETABLE	0AA.	SOLID BAZOOKA	095.	FOUR SLOT
040.	MIMITTO VEGETABLE	0AB.	ROCKET PUNCH	096.	ARGENT FLAME BRAC.
041.	KINIKE VEGETABLE	0AC.	ENEMY LAUNCHER	097.	ARGOSA BRACELET
042.	PALAMA VEGETABLE	0AD.	(TOU HAKKEN	098.	THUNDER BRACELET
043.	TANTANG VEGETABLE	0AE.	MAXIMUM RAY	099.	DRAGON BRACELET
044.	KARAKA VEGETABLE	0AF.	BEAM SPARKLE	09A.	MIRAGE BRACE
045.	GUIMAUVE VEGETABLE	0B0.	MITHRIL CLIP	09B.	ESCORT GUARD
046.	TENT	0B1.	(KUNAI NAIFUIN	09C.	MITE TEAR
047.	POWER UP	0B2.	SILVER RAPETTA	09D.	(ZAIDOUTSUU)
048.	GUARD UP	0B3.	GOLD RAPETTA	09E.	(EZ NOR X KEI)
049.	MAGIC UP	0B4.	ADAMANT CLIP	09F.	CROCORO BRACELET
04A.	MIND UP	0B5.	CRYSTAL CLIP	0A0.	POWER SHIRT
04B.	SPEED UP	0B6.	MAGIC COMB	0A1.	(TOUTSAN CHOKKI)
04C.	LUCK UP	0B7.	PLATINUM RAPETTA	0A2.	EARRING
04D.	MIG FRUIT	0B8.	BATTLE CLIP	0A3.	TALISMAN
04E.	KARAA FRUIT	0B9.	(KOUGEKI GUARD	0A4.	CROCORO FEATHER
04F.	PORORO FRUIT	0BA.	SERAPH COMB	0A5.	CHARM
050.	YARAMU FRUIT	0BB.	REFINGTE HORN	0A6.	CHAMPION BELT
051.	RASAN FRUIT	0BC.	SPRIGGAN CLIP	0A7.	POISON RING
052.	SARAMA FRUIT	0BD.	LIMITED BOW	0A8.	YOUNGNESS RING
053.	KAJIMU FRUIT	0BE.	GUARD ROD	0A9.	SACRED
054.	MIRIO FRUIT	0BF.	MITHRIL ROD	0AA.	STAR PENDANT
055.	ZINC BATTERY	0C0.	FULL METAL ROD	0AB.	SILVER EDGE GLASS
056.	POCKET TOSHIN	0C1.	(KOU NO YUE KO	0AC.	HEADBAND
057.	S U.M.G.C.S MANUAL	0C2.	PRISM ROD	0AD.	FAIRY RING
058.	CATASTROPHE MANUAL	0C3.	RUBBER ROD	0AE.	ANGEL RING
059.	FINAL HEAVEN MANUAL	0C4.	MIGANG ROD	0AF.	WHITE CAPE
05A.	GRANT WORK'S GOD MAN.	0C5.	COMPOSITE/VITIZER ROD	0B0.	MERMEN SHOES
05B.	COSMO MEMORY MANUAL	0C6.	FAIRY TAIL	0B1.	PEACE RING
05C.	UNIVERSE MANUAL	0C7.	UMBRELLA	0B2.	RIBBON
05D.	CRACK MANUAL	0C8.	(KOUGEKI GUARD	0B3.	FLAME RING
05E.	HIGHNINO MANUAL	0C9.	SPEAR	0B4.	COLD RING
05F.	(1)5 SHIN-NA X)	0CA.	SILVER FIRE	0B5.	THUNDER RING
060.	SUPER ALLOY SWEEPER	0CB.	TRIDENT	0B6.	TETRA ELEMENT
061.	MASAMUNE BLADE	0CC.	BATTLE AXE	0B7.	SAFETY BIT
062.	SAVE CRYSTAL	0CD.	PARTISAN	0B8.	ANGRY RING
063.	(DO'S EX - FIGHT DLAY	0CE.	SERPENT HALBERD	0B9.	CURSED RING
064.	SIGNED COLORED PAPER	0CF.	JAVELIN	0BA.	PROTECTION RING
065.	MY LIFE'S GAMBLING	0D0.	GLOW LANCE	0BB.	SPIRIT BELT
066.	102	0D1.	MOP	0BC.	REFLECTION RING
067.	103	0D2.	DRAGOON LANCE	0BD.	WATER RING
068.	104	0D3.	(X FUU X GETSUTOU)	0BE.	(HYOUGOU NO HA.)
069.	105	0D4.	(KUSURIBA X SEKI)	0BF.	HYPNO-CROWN
06A.	106	0D5.	(HOMOSHISO)		
06B.	107	0D6.	VEDLA GOSPEL		

THE ABOVE CODES WERE SUPPLIED BY JIN KIM

2. Enter the Priest's Room and take the Key to the Drop-ladder from the priest's robe.
3. Enter the Chapel and take the Astronomical Plate from the wall.
4. Enter the Torture Chamber and take the Candle from the ground. Use the Key to unlock the Drop-ladder and climb up.
5. Go to the Courtyard. Talk to Barton and give him the Note. He translates it and gives you the Door Spell. (Step on it before Barton gets killed.)
6. Enter the Bedroom and examine the newspaper between the beds. Examine the corner of the room the rat ran into three times to find a Key to the Study.
7. Enter the Servant's Room and examine the bed to find the Copper Book.
8. Walk through the Kitchen to the Storeroom. Examine the floor, then examine the left bookshelf twice to open a trapdoor to the Wine Cellar. Enter the Wine Cellar, look around, and leave. After the sound scares Jennifer, look behind the wine racks to find Beth. Talk to her twice for the Mansion Key. (If Beth isn't there, the Key is in the left wine barrel.)
9. Go to the Large Gate and examine it. Jennifer uses the Key to open it.

JENNIFER AT BARROWS CASTLE (PART 2)

1. Use the Oil Can to open the door under the stairs, which leads to the Storage Room.
2. In the Storage Room, examine the coffin for a Box Key. Examine the bottom of the bookshelf for a Rope. Use the Rope on the door next to the box to keep it closed. Use the Key on the box to release Helen.
3. Go upstairs and out to the Balcony. Examine the locked door to the right. Scissorman! Click on the "dodge point" on the ledge to escape him and run into the room where Nolan is resting. Talk to him.
4. Enter the Library and examine the box on top of the bookshelf, then examine the stepstool to find the Family Tree.
5. Return to the parlor and take the Map from behind the portrait of Quentin Burroughs.
6. Return upstairs to the Living Room and take the Matches from Tim.
7. Return to the Study and examine the desk for a hint about which well to climb down in the Secret Library. Examine the fireplace once. Use the Candle on the Candlestick on the desk, then use the Matches on the Candlestick and examine the fireplace again for a Mansion Map.
8. Enter the Library and examine the scraped part of the floor next to the bookshelf. Use the Copper Book on the bookshelf to open a path to the Wells. Go down the Well that matches the symbol on the Astronomical Plate to reach the Channel Room.
9. In the Channel Room, examine the floor in front of the altar to get the Dagger. When the mummy appears, escape through the door.
10. Return to the Courtyard and examine the right tree to drain the fountain and open a path to the Underground.
11. Enter the Underground. The Scissorman reveals his true identity and Nolan joins you. When Jennifer faces the hole about 30 centimeters wide, place the Devil Statue into it. Jennifer says the words and opens the door. When the Scissorman is clutching onto your leg, use the Dagger to send him dropping to his doom. You win!

JENNIFER AT UNIVERSITY LAB

1. Go to the Storage Room on the 1st floor and get the Oil Can.
2. Get the Ladder Key from the Security Room on the 1st floor.
3. Go to the Exit on the 3rd floor and use the Ladder Key to open the box under the window.

NOLAN AT RICK'S HOUSE

1. Enter the Kitchen and click on the Mask for the location of Barrow's Mansion. When the Mask flies up, take the Vase off the table and throw it at the Mask.
2. Enter the Box Room and take the Detergent from the shelf.
3. Go upstairs to the Bedroom and examine the closet twice to find the Devil Statue.
4. Go to the Backyard and throw the Detergent at the Dog.

ENDINGS

HELEN'S "B" ENDING: Helen must let Jennifer get killed by Scissorman in the Chapel.
HELEN'S "C" ENDING: Helen must enter the Underground Cave without finding the Door Spell.
HELEN'S "D" ENDING: Helen must go to the Torture Room and meet Barton without finding the Door Spell.
HELEN'S "E" ENDING: Jennifer must clear the second scenario without finding the Devil Statue.
JENNIFER'S "B" ENDING: Jennifer must open the door in the Underground Cave, but get pulled into the abyss by Scissorman.
JENNIFER'S "C" ENDING: Jennifer must make sure Helen and Nolan are alive, then enter the Underground Cave without finding the Door Spell.
JENNIFER'S "D" ENDING: Jennifer must go to the Underground Cave without making sure that Helen and Nolan are alive.
JENNIFER'S "E" ENDING: Jennifer must clear the second scenario without finding the Devil Statue.

EASTER EGGS

- If you've gotten an "A" ending, go to the title screen and press START on Controller 2 to start a game, then play as you normally would with Controller 1.
- If you finish the game with all the endings, play again for a hard-core bonus.

Send all code submissions to:
EXECUTE
Dimension Publishing
1175 Chess Drive, Suite E
Foster City, CA 94404
or email us at: **d3@quake.net**

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FOR EXAMPLE.

BEHIND A TREE.

AND HIDE

FOR THE WOODS

LIKE HIGHTAIL IT

SWORD FIGHT.

REAL SAMURAI

YOU'D DO IN A

ALL THE THINGS

NOW YOU CAN DO

'REAL ENOUGH FOR YOU?

'NO LIFE BAR

'NO TIME LIMIT

'BLOODY DEATH BLOWS

'MASTER SWORDPLAY

FORESTS, TEMPLES

'FIGHT IN RIVERS,

武士道ブレード

BUSHIDO BLADE™

SQUARESOFT™

TEEN T CONTENT RATED BY ESRB

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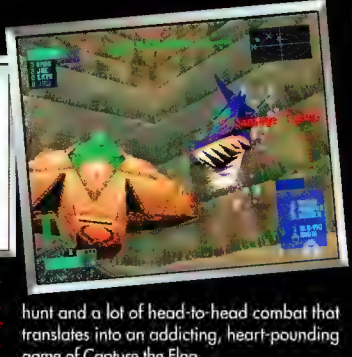
CRITICAL DEPTH



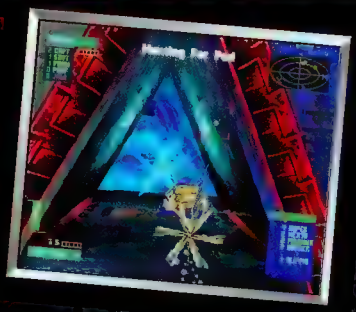
Chances are, if you own a PlayStation, you've already played a Singletrac game. This group of programmers, artists, designers and producers living in Salt Lake City, Utah are well known, industry-wide, for producing triple-A blockbuster titles and have been around since the PlayStation's US launch, back in September of '95. From the beginning, they struck a deal to exclusively develop original titles to be published and distributed under Sony Computer Entertainment America's label. Their efforts produced Twisted Metal, WarHawk, Jet Moto, Twisted Metal 2 (and the upcoming Jet Moto 2) — all of which enjoyed huge success, to the point that three out of the four currently released titles still sit on many top ten sales lists.

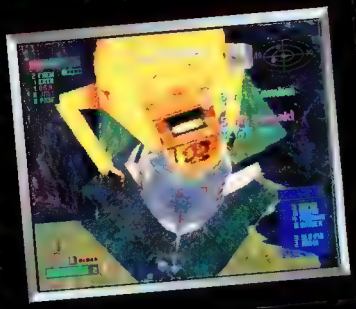
Recently, having fulfilled their obligations with SCEA, Singletrac set out on their own, (with the help of GT Interactive), and have developed a new and original title that may (make that will) remind some of a combination of their earlier titles wrapped up in one game. Playing and looking like an underwater version of Twisted Metal, with the complete freedom of movement found in WarHawk, Critical Depth can be characterized as a high-action, vehicular combat game set in underwater 3D environments. It's a little bit treasure hunt and a lot of head-to-head combat that translates into an addicting, heart-pounding game of Capture the Flag.

As with most of their titles, Singletrac has spent as much time developing the back-story as they have the game. The plot surrounds the mystery of strange, ominous-looking, metallic structures of unknown origin surrounded by masses of glowing, pod-like electromagnetic power sources that are being discovered in oceans throughout the world. These strange devices have become known as Thresholds and many believe they will bring power and glory to the first person who can discover the source of their energy and harness it. Now, the world's once tranquil oceans are the battleground for an all-out war, as teams from all over the globe race to uncover the secret of these Thresholds. Your mission is to select a team and join the race of secretive governments, fanatical environmentalists, surreptitious organizations, greedy treasure hunters and the like, in the race to collect the five glowing pods, found strewn throughout each level, and activate the Thresholds.

Critical Depth is played-out over ten underwater environments, from around the world, teeming with sunken ships, lost cities, dark catacombs, icy glaciers and many mysterious secrets. There are a total of 12 characters from which you can choose (not including the many hidden ones) — each having their own unique subsurface vehicle and personal reasons for collecting the pods. The object of the game is to be the first to collect all five pods in each level which activates the Threshold, then get out of dodge before someone else can steal them from you. Most of the time this is easier said then done, as up to five other treasure hunting pod-seekers are scouring the level looking for the same booty and each will

EXCLUSIVE





stop at nothing to take them from you using any means necessary. There are three distinct modes of play: Mission, where you play through all ten consecutive levels to reveal your character's ending; Battle, select up to five opponents, the level in which to battle and go to town (the winner is the first to collect the pods or the last one standing (floating?); Death Match, go head-to-head or against the computer in an all-out war — no pods, just death. Luckily, like Twisted Metal, there are tons of special weapons and power-ups scattered throughout each level and, with a little mastery of your craft, you can utilize these weapons to your advantage. For example, it's possible to use your shield to deflect an opponent's missiles right back at him, stun him with a combo move, then use your special weapon to add insult to injury. These powerful combos, when executed correctly, can add incredible amounts of damage to your enemy's ship and, of course, make them drop its precious cargo.

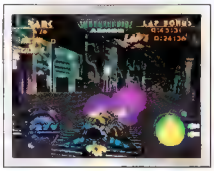
While we will go more in-depth when we review the game in next month's issue, we can say, with Critical Depth, Singletrac continues to do what they do best — make addicting, high-quality, action-oriented PlayStation games, hallelujah!

Greg

RED ASPHALT

INTERPLAY • NOVEMBER

Red Asphalt, from Interplay, is a sequel, of sorts, to the original 16-bit title Rock and Roll Racing. In the game, you take to the post-apocalyptic streets of the future on five different worlds and 24 challengng tracks to compete in deadly races where only the most ruthless survive. Although it could be compared to Psygnosis' Wipeout series, Red Asphalt has a grittier, more sinister feel to it with such weapons on hand as Napalm Liquid Death and "Wrath of God" Death Beams — need we say more. Radical graphics, fast-paced action and incredible effects round out this long-awaited racer.



RAMPAGE WORLD TOUR

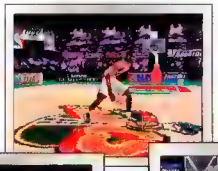
MIDWAY • OCTOBER

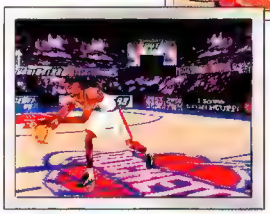
Reintroductions of classic arcade titles have been very common in the 32- bit era, as have "enhanced" classics, brought up to speed to compete in the brave new 32-bit worlds (a la Robotron X, Tempest X, Frogger 3D Etc...). It doesn't take a rocket scientist to figure out why; they're some of the best game concepts ever created. In that tradition, Midway is preparing to release an updated version of the arcade classic, "Rampage." Look for very similar gameplay elements, such as leveling city-scapes, eating damsels in distress and plucking helicopters out of the sky.

NBA SHOOTOUT 98

SONY • DECEMBER

Sony is also releasing their basketball sequel in December, and NBA Shootout 98 will feature tons of new stuff. This year, the game will have every player, except you-know-who. Barkley and Shaq are both in this year, although rumors are that the mound has lost a step. Last year's title had a ton of animations, and 98 will feature FOUR times that (four tons?). There are over 30 signature dunks, a new 2-on-2 contest (looking forward to that) and NBA awards — MVP, Rookie of the Year, and Sixth Man. Cool!



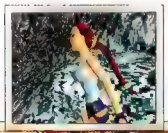


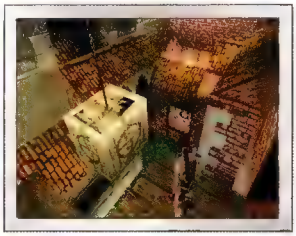
EXPECTING

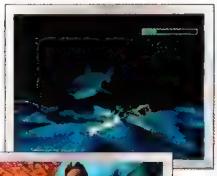
TOMB RAIDER 2

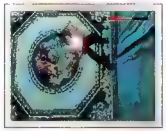
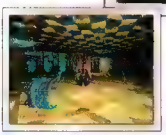
EIDOS • NOVEMBER

Eidos kept the Lara Croft fires burning this month with an expanded playable version of Tomb Raider 2. The game is progressing nicely, with more semi-complete levels that included: "Ice Cave", an underground cave populated with ape-men and tigers and, appropriately enough, covered in snow; "Catacombs", a huge underground cavern; "Underwater", an adventure in liquid space at the ocean floor — where you engage scuba divers and sharks, as you try to make your way to the sunken ship featured in the "Living Quarters" and "Keel" levels; "Living Quarters", part of a very impressive underwater world built around a rusted-out ship; "Keel", more underwater action inside the hull of the once grand ship; the "Opera House" and "Venice" levels featured in last month's preview and, lastly, "The Great Wall", a really cool outdoor level along the Great Wall of China. If you played the original game, you know what an addictive title it is, and the sequel is shaping up to be everything Tomb Raider was and much more. Fans of the original are going to be in for a real treat when TR2 hits the stores in November — look for our cover story next month!





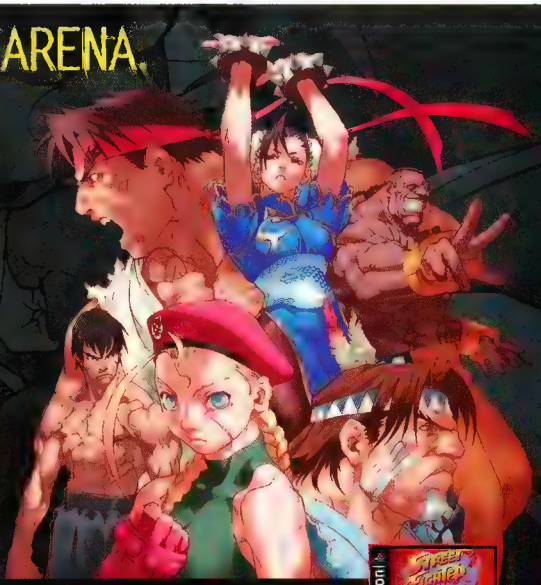


JUST ENTERED THE ARENA.

STREET FIGHTER COLLECTION

Remember these guys? They remember you. This game packs punch. 27 Street Fighters in 3 different games. Super Street Fighter II, Super Street Fighter II Turbo, and Street Fighter Alpha 2 Gold, all in their true arcade form. Own the Street Fighter legacy. At around $1.50 a fighter, that's a fair fight, dontcha think?



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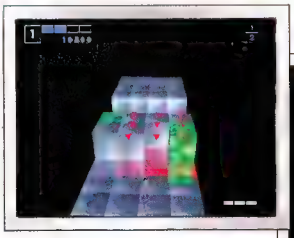
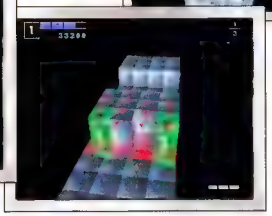
INTELLIGENT QUBE

SONY • OCTOBER

Here's a nifty little puzzle game from Sony Japan (where the game has done remarkably well) that will be sure to entertain all the members in your family. The goal in IQ is to clear each 3D stage of cascading cubes before they smash your little polygon character. Avoid the black qubes and use the green cubes for strategic multi-hits. The fewer moves you take to clear a stage, the higher your score — and thus your IQ.





GRAN TURISMO

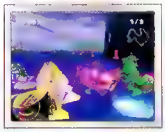
SONY • FEBRUARY

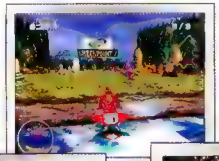
Here are just a few early sneak-peek screen-shots of an up-and-coming racing game from Sony Japan (of Motor Toon Grand Prix fame) titled Gran Turismo. While not much is known about it, at this point, other than it will be one of Sony's big titles for first quarter next year, we can tell you, after getting a brief, hands-on demo, that it is something special. Expect gorgeous textures, a smooth frame-rate, unparalleled realism, and an inordinate amount of real-life licensed cars. Since it's not due out until February, there will be plenty more coverage in upcoming issues... stay tuned!

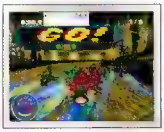
JET MOTO 2

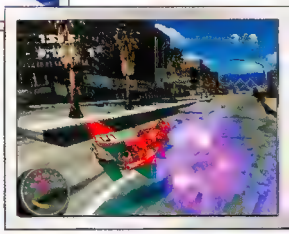
SONY • NOVEMBER

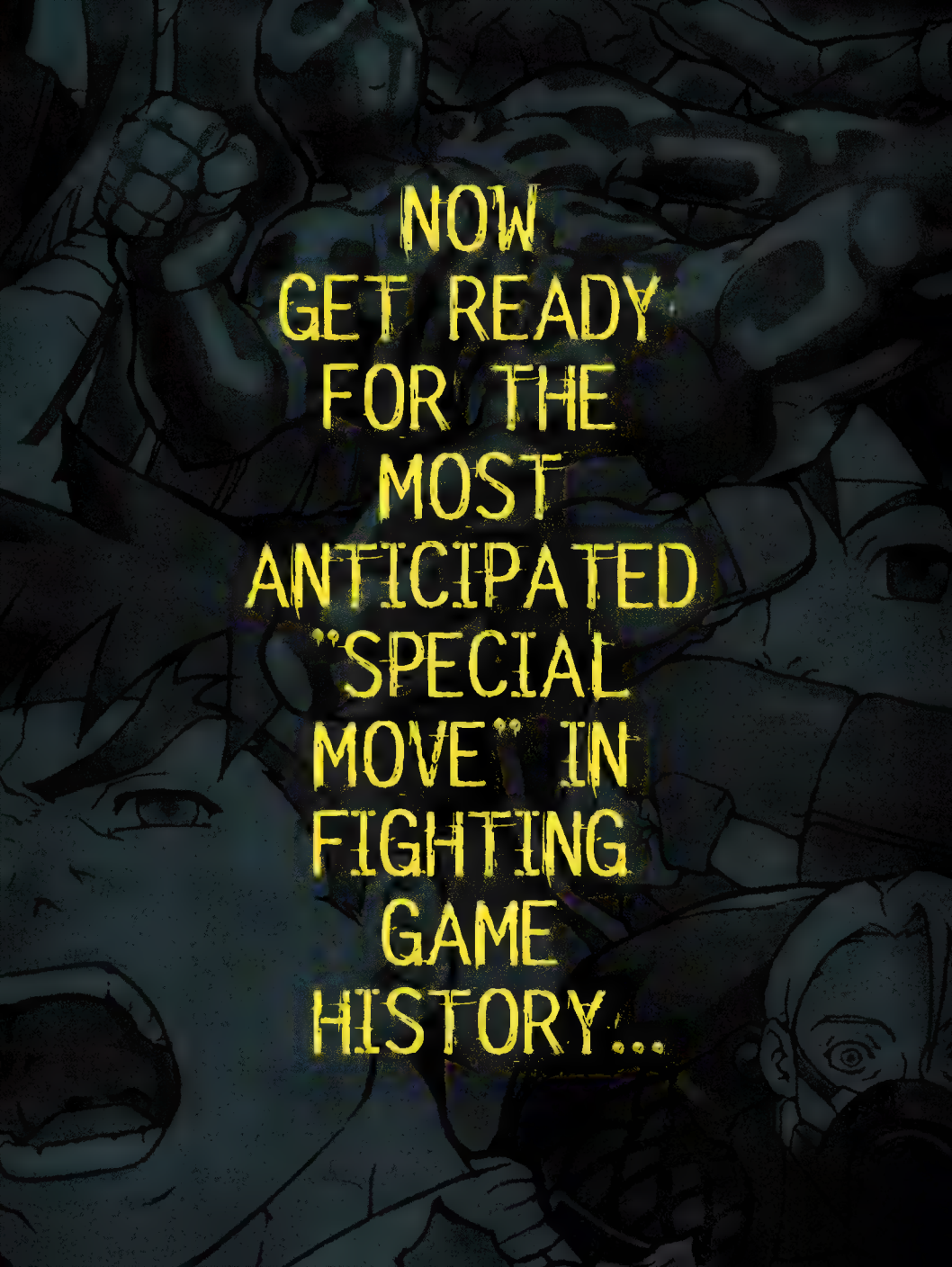
Riding on the heels of last year's success, Sony is readying Jet Moto 2 to be released just in time for the X-Mas season. This year's game has been overhauled from start to finish, with prettier/cleaner textures, tighter control (implementing the use of new air brakes), which includes compatibility with Sony's analog pad, improved AI for the computer opponents, an improved, more balanced level of difficulty and more fantasy-inspired tracks — such as a shaken and sunken, quaked-out LA, a roller-coaster — complete with loop-the-loops, and a track that takes you from the lofty heights of heaven to the infernos of hell. As good as the original was, the sequel is that much better.










NOW
GET READY
FOR THE
MOST
ANTICIPATED
"SPECIAL
MOVE" IN
FIGHTING
GAME
HISTORY...

STREET FIGHTER'S IN 3-D

Been missin' Street Fighter gameplay? The world's premiere fighter goes kickin' and screamin' into 3-D. This beast pits the original 8 Street Fighter vets — Guile, Zangief, Ryu, Ken, Bison, Chun-Li, Dhalsim and Sakura in an amazing arcade hit. What else is the same? Signature Street Fighter gameplay. New? Lots! Crack your knuckles and welcome 12 all-new fighters in the biggest Street Fighter ever! Playable bosses, 7 different play modes, a total of 23 characters, this is the 3-D game worth fighting for...

TEEN T AGES 13+ CONTENT RATED BY E.S.R.B.

PlayStation

STREET FIGHTER® EX plus α

Ryu got your number? New Training Mode adds moves, reduces bruises.

New Multi-Hit combos bring 'em to their knees.

Slow Mo Replay makes victory even sweeter.

CAPCOM

www.capcom.com

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FUTURE.PLAY

COOL BOARDERS 2

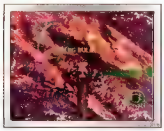
SONY • NOVEMBER

Sequel-mania continues this Christmas with Sony's follow-up to last year's downhill snowboarding game, Cool Boarders 2. Yes, the original was decent, but the sequel has been majorly improved with the stuff that gamer's have asked for. Expect new play modes, including Season, Slalom, Half Pipe, Practice; a totally new two player Versus mode that lets you compete against a friend; a whopping total of 16 tracks to shred on — that's 11 more than the original; tons of brand new boards plus the ability to create your own; 40 new tricks and maneuvers like Front Side 540's, Back Side Alley-Oops and 720 Indy Nosebones; ten different characters with their own unique characteristics; and a totally tweaked and revamped collision and physics model. Cool Boarders 2 ships this November. Whoohoo!

MDK

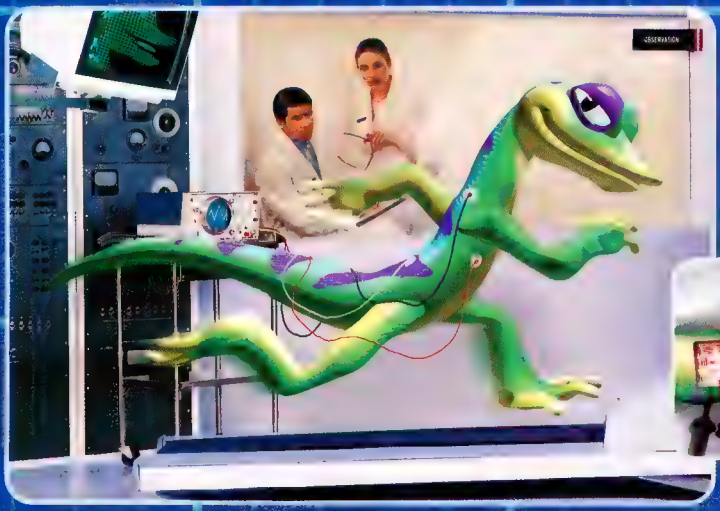
PLAYMATES • NOVEMBER

Hold on boys and girls, the action/shooter that smacks with the coolest play mechanics, MDK, is finally being released for the PlayStation come November! Not only is the best-selling PC game being ported over to the best, nay, ONLY console you should own, but PlayStation gamers are in for several exclusive PSX-only gaming treats. Among the new additions that will be implemented in the PS version are never-before-seen secret alien arenas, a Redbook audio musical score courtesy of music maestro Tommy Tallarico and support for Sony's analog pad. In addition, the conversion from PC to PS has come across so well, you won't believe you're playing it on a console.



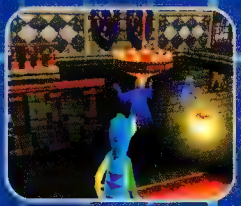
EXPECTING

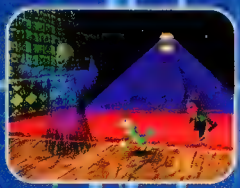
WE'VE REBUILT HIM . . .
MADE HIM STRONGER . . . FASTER . . .
WE HAVE THE TECHNOLOGY

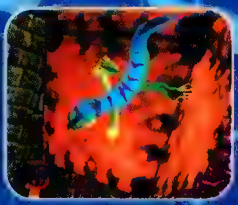


GEX: Enter the Gecko.
360 degrees of "go anywhere you want" 3D EXPLORATION! We're pushing the limits of 3D technology by combining free-roaming gameplay with brilliantly detailed graphics and special effects.

GEX is juiced with over 125 unique moves and 3,400 frames of fluid character animation. HBO® comedian Dana Gould returns as the voice of GEX, lampooning Hollywood's finest with over 500 lip-synched celebrity impressions and smart ass one-liners.







For more GEX product and contest info, visit our website at www.crystald.com

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RATING PENDING RP CONTENT RATED BY ESRB

PlayStation

PC CD-ROM

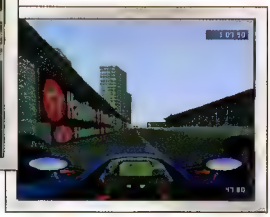
CRYSTAL DYNAMICS

FUTURE.PLAY

CART WORLD SERIES

SONY • NOVEMBER

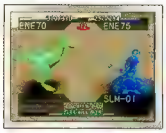
CART (Championship Auto Racing Teams) World Series is the new racing sim from Sony that looks to go head-to-head with Psygnosis' F1 Championship Edition in November. CART features all the teams, cars, and personalities, as well as more than a dozen different tracks. Laguna Seca, Homestead, and Long Beach are among the featured tracks, where the Indy cars can reach speeds over 200 mph. Arcade and simulation modes are present, and the cars can disintegrate slowly, as pieces fall off little by little.



MONSTER RANCHER

TECMO • NOVEMBER

A little bit Tamagotchi, a little bit Master of Monsters, the idea behind Rancher is to raise your monster by feeding it proper foods, giving it balanced training, teaching it proper values and, overall, just bringing it up healthy to compete against other monsters in a gladiator-like arena. What makes this title even more unique is the way the monsters are "conceived". Take any CD — be it music, multimedia, another PlayStation game, whatever, pop it in to your PlayStation, and the game reads special information off of it which, conversely, determines your monster's breed, sex, characteristics and attributes. Now how's that for cool?

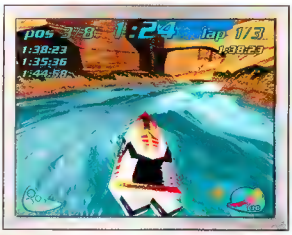


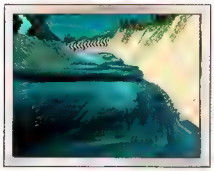
EXPECTING

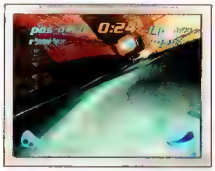
RAPID RACER

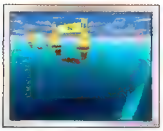
SONY • FEBRUARY

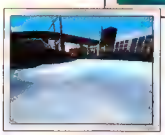
Coming out of Sony Europe is an amazing white water racing game titled Rapid Racer. Sporting ultra-high resolution graphics running at a break-neck 60 frames per second, you'll swear you're looking at something straight out of today's arcades. The game pits you against seven other powerboats, across a variety of rivers set throughout the world, and sports amazing water effects and incredibly realistic physics. While there isn't much information on the title or its pending US release, we expect it to ship early next year. From just the glimpse we were given at E3, we predict that this will be one title to watch out for.









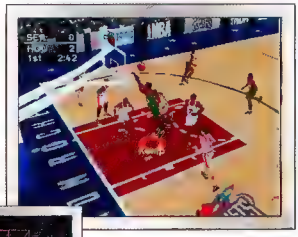
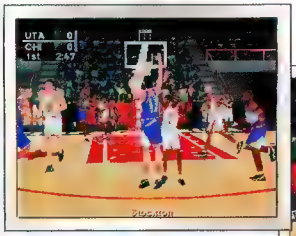


The upside:
WENCHES.
The downside:
THE PLANK.

NBA LIVE 98

EA SPORTS • NOVEMBER

The basketball machine rolls on for EA Sports, as they prepare to launch NBA Live 98. This latest installment will bring a few new features, like Verne Lundquist joining "EJ" in the booth for the play-by-play, and a bunch of new offensive moves. The new animations include cross-over dribbles, some new slams, and behind the back dribbles. The coolest new feature may be the camera option that lets you customize the angles to just about any position you can imagine. We'll hoop it up in the December issue.

VS.

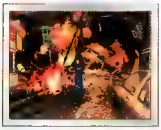
T*HQ • NOVEMBER

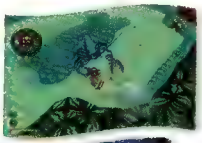
T*HQ is on a mini-roll, what with the great success of WCW Vs. the World, and now they hope to add another winner with the release of Vs. This 3D fighting game runs at a whopping 60 fps, has over sixteen characters to choose from, and allows the gamer to utilize some superlative defensive maneuvers. The different fighters incorporate many styles of fighting, from Karate, Kung Fu, Jujitsu, to good old fashioned American street brawling. For the thug in you, your player can belong to one of four different gangs — no word yet on what their colors are.

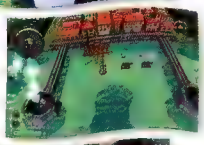
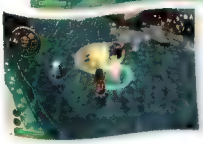
RESIDENT EVIL 2

CAPCOM • JANUARY

Finally! A launch date of January has been set for the much-delayed and eagerly awaited Resident Evil 2. Although we haven't actually gotten our hands on a finished product yet, we have played the demo that is included with RE: Director's Cut and we can say with utmost confidence that it's been truly worth the wait. Although the game's graphical engine is basically the same — pre-rendered backgrounds, cinema-like camera angles and 3D polygonal characters — the detail has been upped ten-fold. The textures on the characters are much cleaner and detailed and the variety of zombies and creatures you encounter has been increased, as well as the amount of enemies on screen at any given time. Expect new weapons, a more user-friendly interface, plenty of challenging puzzles, scares and suspense, gore galore and, of course, RE's trademark "quality" acting.





The salt spray hits your lips as you look into the deep blue. The frigate creaks and the plank bobs. Will this be the end? Welcome to Shipwreckers, life on the high seas at its swash-buckling best. Wield flame throwers and hurl lightning bolts as you man cannons and command great vessels under the Jolly Roger. Battle one to five other players. The rewards are great, the puzzles daunting and the excitement high—just watch your step. The plank is a cruel mistress.

Visit www.psygnosis.com and enter the Shipwreckers Treasure Quest Sweepstakes.

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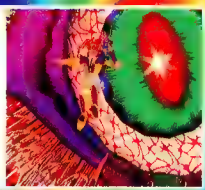
ID

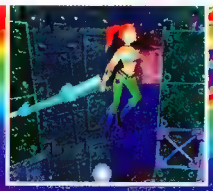
EGO

Satisfy all your needs, wants and...

Descend into the all new psycnotic world of Pandemonium 2 and twist reality inside out Explore a whacked out psychedelic landscape with Nikki's insane double jump–then dominate with Fargus' maniacal attacks by hurling his viper-tongued side-kick Sid for skull crushing good times. Navigate the undulating 3D hyper-kinetic backgrounds 'till it turns your brain to puddin'. Hey...it's a twisted new world of furious gameplay that'll devour you before you truly understand it. So have a good trip.



Pilot a giant mech t
warped 3D tunnels



Nikki

Fargus

PlayStation

Call 1.800.771.3772 for Game Rating Information

PANDEMONIUM 2

CRYSTAL DYNAMICS

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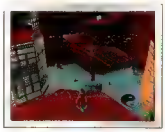
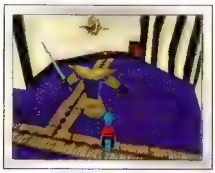
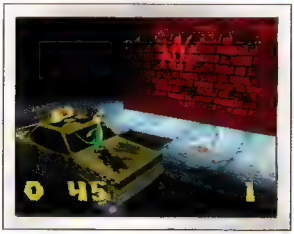
GEX: ENTER THE GEKKO

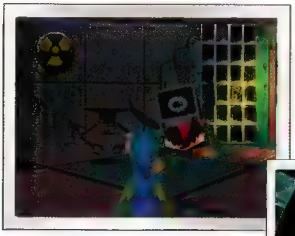
CRYSTAL DYNAMICS • JANUARY

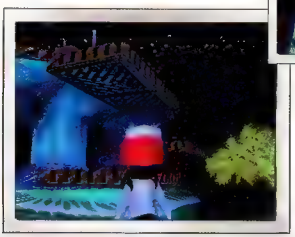


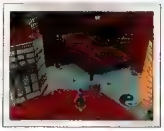
Just as we were closing this issue, Crystal Dynamics put the latest version of Gex: Enter the Gecko in our hands — and we couldn't wait to show you what's new and cool. In the technology department, the Gex team has now implemented Z-axis Buffering (allowing for special effects like Gex moving through water), added reflective surfaces to the game, and software texture smoothing is just around the corner. In addition, there are a number of new levels that include the streets of New York City, a couple boss levels, the final level featuring Rez and two Kung Fu levels. If you have been reading PSExtreme over the past few months, you know that we are pretty excited about the potential of this new Gex. It is the first game to combine large, open, go-anywhere 3D environments with high resolution textures and special effects, on the PlayStation. Gex: Enter the Gecko is scheduled for a mid-January '98 release.











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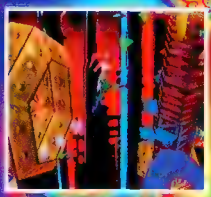

Hidden bonus levels like
to funky new faces

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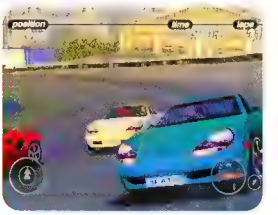
misleading. simulator.

PORSCHE



Not long ago, Porsche came to us to develop a driving game featuring their new Boxster automobile. Needless to say, we accepted. So what do you get when you put a bunch of PlayStation™ guys and Porsche guys in a room together? This: the opportunity to take a Porsche Boxster through open-road environments and onto tracks like Stuttgart and stomp on the accelerator until your heart begins to fibrillate. Just try to remember, it's only a game.

PORSCHE Challenge

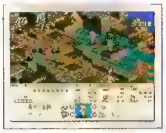
PlayStation

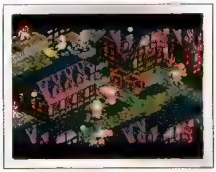
NEVER UNDERESTIMATE
THE POWER OF PLAYSTATION™

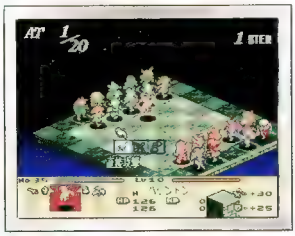
TACTICS OGRE

ATLUS • NOVEMBER

It's up to you, taking on the role of a 16 year old outcast to surmount overwhelming odds and rise to power — the outcome will differ depending on what decision you make. Although Tactics Ogre is considered an RPG, it relies heavily on strategy, presenting the player with huge, turn-based battles like that of Konami's Vandal Hearts or Squaresoft's upcoming Final Fantasy Tactics. Tactics Ogre is currently undergoing translation from Japanese to English and will be hitting US shelves in time for the Christmas rush.







SKULLMONKEYS

EA • NOVEMBER

Skullmonkeys from Neverhood/Dreamworks is a strange title indeed and, quite frankly, we don't think Doug Tenapel, the game's creator, would have it any other way. If you were/are a big Earth Worm Jim fan; like downright hilarious, off-the-wall humor; enjoy the best that old-school gaming has to offer and have a sweet spot in your heart for clay then look no further. The hero of the game is a clay thingamabob named Klaymen, who made his starring debut in their first PC title, The Neverhood. The game is strictly 2D side-scrolling, butt-bouncing action, but that's definitely not a bad thing and the graphics are lush and colorful. We'll have more to come.

FORSAKEN

ACCLAIM • FEBRUARY

Acclaim's Forsaken, developed by Probe in the UK, could be compared in some ways to Interplay's Descent. Both games allow the player to blast their way through futuristic tunnels, hallways and vast open spaces with total freedom of movement in any given direction. What differentiates the two, is Forsaken runs at a fast-paced 60 frames per second and has you competing in fierce matches against other computer or human opponents similar to that of Twisted Metal. Probe/Acclaim are taking there time with the project to make it just right and are planning to release it early next year.

HOW DID CROC FIND HIS COMPETITION?

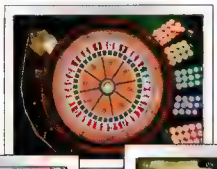
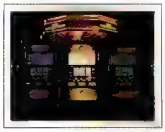
DUKE NUKE'EM 3D

GT INTERACTIVE • NOVEMBER

Ok, so everybody knows there will be an all-out Duke Nukem assault across all of the next-generation consoles this fourth-quarter. What people don't know is that the PlayStation version will have some extra goodies not found on any of the other versions. First of all, Duke Nukem: Total Meltdown will NOT be censored in any way, shape or form. Just take a gander at the accompanying screen-shots to get a good idea at what we're talking about. Plus, the PS version will have six new and exclusive levels, in addition to the original 28, that parody popular themes and other PlayStation games. For example, there will be a "Womb Raider" level where all of the enemies will be in Lara Croft-style outfits sporting scoops of gravity defying flesh. Additionally, the PS Duke will feature re-rendered enemy graphics, compatibility with Sony's new analog pad, 2 player Deathmatch mode with the link-cable, 8 player Deathmatch mode utilizing BOT opponents, a new 3D sound system and new redbook CD audio. Come get some this November.

CAESAR'S PALACE

INTERPLAY • NEVEMBER

After a virtual casino drought for the last two years, the PlayStation is finally getting not one, but two gambling games this fourth quarter. Not to be upstaged by Virgin's Golden Nugget, Interplay has gone straight to the strip to bring gamers and gamblers alike their version of a casino game with Caesar's Palace. You won't find any FMV starring Burt Ward in this version, but you will find plenty of gambling going on — presented in the PlayStation's high-resolution mode. From Black Jack and Slots to Craps, Baccarat and Roulette, there's plenty of ways to lose your virtual cash. And, if you need a refresher on craps or haven't mastered the game of 21, there's an authoritative tutorial to walk you through the steps.

DELICIOUS!

"Like Lara Croft, CROC has more moves than you can shake a stick at."
-PSM PlayStation Magazine

"Move over Mario. . .and cruise by Crash. . .CROC rocks!"
- GAMEPRO

"CROC is looking to be one of the best 3D platform games for the year!"
-PSExtreme

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CROC
LEGEND OF THE GOBBOS

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"YOU'VE JUST WON THE SUPER BOWL... WHAT ARE YOU GOING TO DO NEXT?"

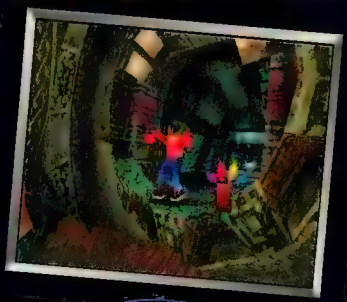
So, you're Sony, Universal Interactive and Naughty Dog, and you are working on the sequel to Crash Bandicoot... what do you do? The original game is, nearly a year later, still the best looking game on the PlayStation. It is also one of the biggest worldwide success stories in the business — selling over 1.5 million units with the distinction of being the best-selling game ever in Japan, from a foreign software publisher/developer. In addition, Crash has been awarded countless accolades and magazine covers from the video game press... how do you out-do what you did so well, last year?

The answer lies within the 25 levels (+ bosses) of "Crash Bandicoot 2: Cortex Strikes Back." Not content with simply producing some new graphics, and a trick here and there, the Crash team spent the better part of the past year focusing on going much deeper into new gameplay experiences and making the game look even better than the original. We recently sat down with Universal Interactive's Mark Cerny and, Naughty Dog's Jason Rubin to talk about Crash 2, and then we were let loose with our own version of the game. How do you follow-up a legend? Read on and find out!

JASON, MARK, CRASH AND SEQUELS

Jason began by posing the questions that we all have been asking ourselves over the past year: "Do you start over? Go for something that is free-roaming? Continue along the same path? Based on consumer

EXTREME



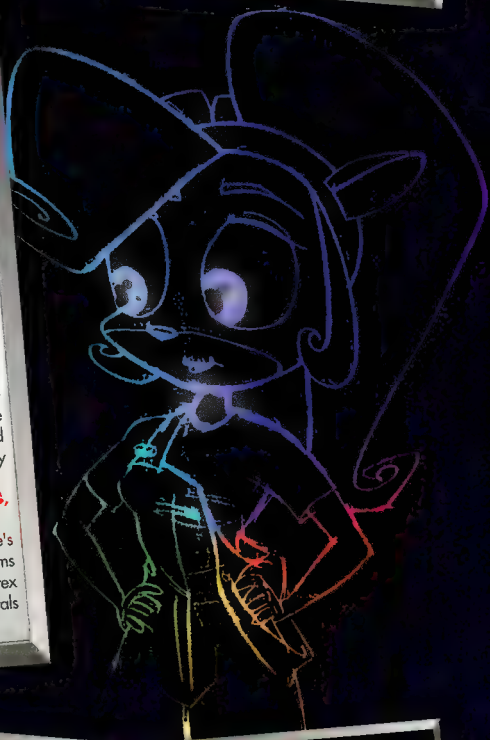
response, we decided to improve upon what we created versus starting something entirely different. Having said that, how much can we pack into the new game? We wanted every special effect that we were capable of producing. More importantly, we asked the hard questions about gameplay and set out to make Crash 2 the best PLAYING game, this Christmas, which is the most important thing."

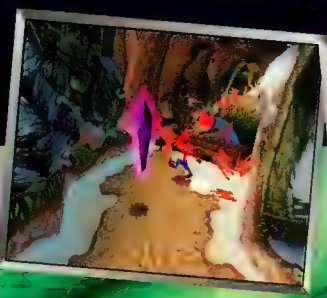
Recognizing the high difficulty level of the original game, their stated goal was to make Crash 2 a little easier for the average player to get into, while keeping it interesting for the more accomplished player. To do this, the game actually analyzes where the player is consistently having trouble in the game. When he saves the game to his memory card, it will keep track of his abilities and recognize his difficulties. If the player is struggling, the game might give him an Aku-Aku mask, or an additional checkpoint — or it might make the boulder roll slower.

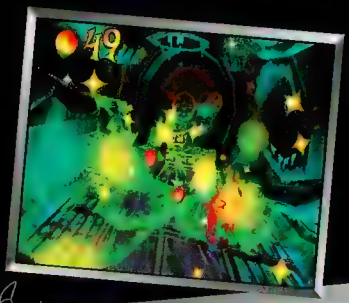
According to Mark: "A rookie player should still be able to complete a level in no more than 40 minutes. With this system, the accomplished player does not get penalized, but more players can be brought into Crash's world." Jason adds: "In the first game, there were a number of spikes that quickly ramped up the difficulty. We are hoping that the new game will present a great challenge but, that at the same time, we can make the game's transitions smoother and keep less accomplished players from throwing down the controller, in frustration, because they can not complete a level."

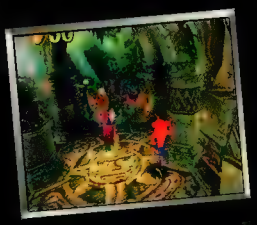
MORE TECHNOLOGY, MORE GAMEPLAY, MORE LEVELS, MORE GEMS

Of course, this is Crash Bandicoot we're talking about here, so the game's challenge does not lie simply in surviving a level, but in acquiring gems and, new to the sequel, crystals. It seems that the plot will present Cortex as a good guy (initially, at least) and he needs Crash to collect 25 crystals





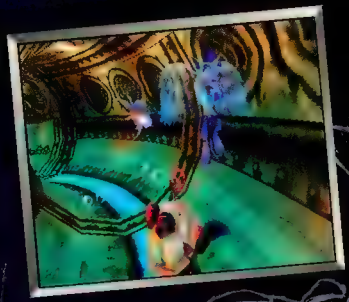




that will allow him to power-up his Cortex Vortex and "save the world." Well, things get a little sticky when Cortex's former employee, N. Brio, informs Crash that Cortex is still the same nasty guy that he's always been and that you shouldn't be collecting the 25 crystals and helping Cortex, but you should gather the game's 42 gems and help N. Brio instead... hmmm. Gem acquisition is tricky, but not affected by the 'perfect' requirement of last year's game. You still have to destroy all of the boxes on a level, but you don't have to do it with one life. Crystal acquisition, however, is simply a matter of going through all 25 levels. The crystals are easy to find and right along the main paths.

Crash features a number of new moves and gameplay techniques that take the series to new heights. Crash now uses a jet-pack, crawls under the ground, has combo jumps, crawls, hangs, rides a jet-board, walks, does a belly flop, ducks on the run, ducks then jumps and is fully analog controllable. There are over 5,000 frames of animation on the Crash character alone. And the animation isn't just there to make the game prettier. The belly flop, for example, is required to break a new metal-framed crate. According to Jason, "We wanted to create the feeling that Crash is actually alive... whatever happens to him, he reacts to. You will also notice that the background graphics are even richer and more detailed than they were in the first game. There are 50% more polygons used to create the levels this year and we have made modifications in our Z-axis buffering system (this helps to create the smooth textures found in the game) to make Crash 2 even more detailed."

EXTREME

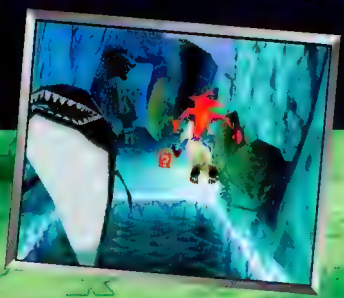


Mark adds; "In addition, it's a bigger game. We wanted to create a game with a larger feeling of exploration. 70% of the levels have some alternate path. You finish the game by beating Cortex and then, when you go back in for 100% completion, you will play 50% more stuff and it's some good stuff too — there are characters that you will never see until you go back to get all of the gems." Jason continued: "Mark has brought a much more thoughtful approach to game design, and one of the nice things that this creates is puzzles. With all of the added moves, Crash 2 asks the player to stop and think about how he will destroy a box, or if he should even hit it at all. We are going to reward the heavy-duty gamers with some of the strategies involved in acquiring the gems."

AT THE CONTROLS

In our initial play time with the game, we found that the game does, in fact, play much bigger. And the things that some players may have found annoying or difficult in the original game have been changed for the better. A good example of this is the Bonus Rounds, which now come to the player within the structure of a level — with no load times. You can't die in the bonus areas, but you must get all of the boxes to score a gem on that level, as opposed to the original game, where you would lose a life if you died in the bonus area, but you didn't have to get the boxes in the area to get the gem. You simply cannot just rush through the game running and jumping — the game requires that you think before you leap and that you plot out a checkpoint-to-checkpoint strategy. In addition, levels that were basically driving levels in the original (Boulders, Hog Wild) now have areas where you stop running and go down a different path to see what there is to see. Crash 2 is loaded with secrets, long on strategy and moves and has a more cohesive story and game shell than the original. It looks to be everything Crash fans were hoping for in the sequel and much more. Crash 2 will ship to retail in early November and we will have a review of the game in our December issue.

Dave



NUCLEAR STRIKE

PUBLISHED AND DEVELOPED BY ELECTRONIC ARTS

Last year's Soviet Strike (which Eric gave an 82% score) did some things right and some things wrong. The graphics were very nice, but the frame rate was jumpy; the difficulty level was pitched much too high; and there were several situations in which bad guys could shoot you from off-screen, not exactly a fair fight. Nuculer — uh, Nuclear Strike has patched all those problems; the frame rate is up (but still not quite Barry White-smooth), the difficulty level has been toned down (and an Easy setting added), and the bad guys can no longer plug you from nowhere (although it's still difficult to tell who's shooting whom when the firefights get intense).

The slightly hard-to-follow storyline (which unfolds through dozens of MTV-style video clips that seem edited specifically to trigger epileptic seizures) has you in pursuit of a nuclear device, chasing it, and the naughty people responsible for its capture, across the globe, from the steamy jungles of Indochina to the city streets of North Korea. As in the previous Strikes, each locale presents you with at least half a dozen missions to be performed in sequential order, with you at the helm of a bad-ass helicopter (or one of several other vehicle types). These real-time missions usually involve blowing up lots of machinery, such as shooting missiles before they launch, destroying tanks before they overrun friendly positions. There are also several missions involving rescuing and picking up folks with your helicopter's handy-dandy winch (also used to pick up the ammo, fuel and armor refills liberally strewn about each stage). Nuclear Strike certainly has user-friendly gameplay. You can call up information on just about anything during the game, and the navigation compass can be set to guide you toward almost any item on the map. You can toggle between the "classic" Strike view, in which the ground view stays the same as the chopper rotates, or a new view, in which the viewpoint stays above and behind the chopper, with the ground rotating below. This is easily the most configurable and comfortable Strike yet.

Basically, if you've played any of the earlier Strikes, you know exactly what to

expect here. And that's essentially what Eric complained about in his review, and what I'm (slightly) complaining about in mine. After five games, the Strike series feels a little too comfortable, like a shirt you've worn one too many times before washing. I loved Jungle Strike's vast variety of vehicles, and Urban Strike's outside-the-chopper sequences, where you directly controlled the pilot in ground-based shoot-'em-up scenes. Neither of the Strikes on the PS have had that much creativity or originality, and they feel a little stale as a result.

Nuclear Strike is a good shooter with well-tuned difficulty, but there's a degree of repetition involved that can be tedious, especially if you have to fly the same mission too many times. But as with Soviet Strike before it, never reaches the level of 32-bit intensity you expect. It's still quite a bit better than Soviet Strike, and another must for fans of the series.

Zach

THE BOTTOM LINE

89%

COMPATIBILITY

1 Player

EX RATED

Name:
Mia
Age:
19
Height:
5' 7"
Measurements:
36-24-36
Occupation:
Rave DJ
Fighting Technique:
Pi-Kua Kung Fu
Home Turf:
The Streets

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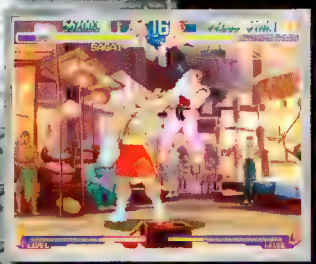
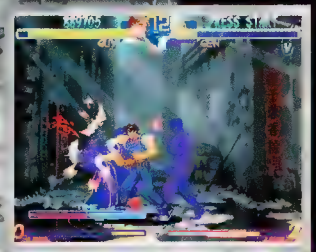
STREET FIGHTER COLLECTION

PUBLISHED AND DEVELOPED BY CAPCOM



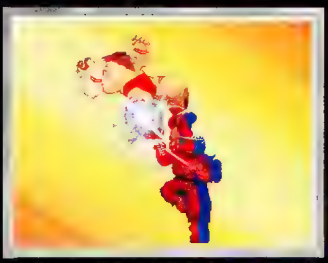


Guaranteed to please everyone who reads or posts to alt.sf2, the Street Fighter Collection packages three (well, 2.5 really) games on two CDs and offers up more beatings than your average evening of Ultimate Fighting. SFC is a fine example of how a video game company can make an extra buck or two off those old bits of code that are hanging around — Namco did it, Midway did, even Atari released a bunch of their ancient, excuse me, "classic" games. The SF Collection is a compilation of older titles that you'll actually play instead of just showing off to your other 20-something friends to reminisce over.

Disc one contains the virtually useless Super Street Fighter 2 and, the all-time fan-fave, Super Street Fighter 2 Turbo. My question is, why include Super in this collection? With Super Turbo being the acknowledged superior fighter of the two, it would have been much nicer to have a 32-bit translation of Street Fighter 2 Turbo or Hyper Fighting instead. At least we finally got a PSX version of Super Turbo, so now all you hold-outs can finally take your 3DOs out into the back yard and shoot 'em. Super Turbo, along with Night Warriors, is one of the two best fighting engines that Capcom has ever produced, and is still a viable game almost four years after its initial arcade release.

Time has not been as kind to the artwork, however. I recall being blown away by the anime-style characters in Super Turbo, but flipping over to the next disk makes the two older titles that much harder to appreciate.

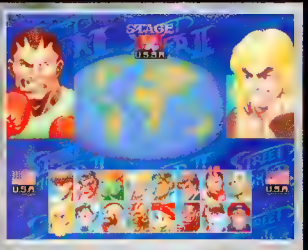
The second disc holds only a single game, Street Fighter Alpha 2 Gold, a pared down version of the "remix" of Street Fighter Alpha 2. Here's the straight dope: Capcom released Street Fighter Alpha 2 in Japan (except it's



called SF Zero 2 there) a few months before the game debuted in American arcades. In that period of time, the SFZ2 design team implemented some changes in the game, including the addition of an all new secret character, Evil Ryu. To rectify these changes, Capcom released (ready for this?) Street Fighter Zero 2 Alpha in Japan, incorporated US changes and added the best feature, a selectable "Dramatic Battle Mode," where two players could face off against a computer enemy at the same time. Unfortunately, the Dramatic Battle mode did not make it into this version; so basically you've got Street Fighter Alpha 2 with some secret characters, new animation, new moves and modes of play. Not much, if you've already got SFA 2 for your PlayStation but, what the hell, it comes with two other games, right?

Three games for the price of one — two of which are worth playing, the third good only for posterity. Revel in the good old days, from just a few years ago, my friends. While the Street Fighter Collection isn't hip and 3D like EX, or filled with groovy Marvel Super Heroes, if you're still a die-hard Street Fighter fan, this is a deal that's definitely worth the price.

Thomas J.



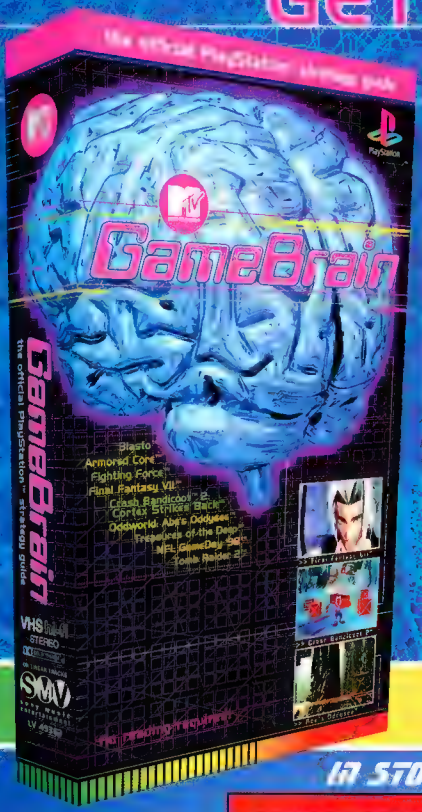
THE BOTTOM LINE

84%

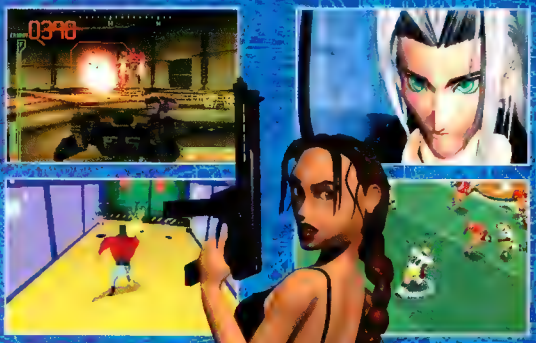
COMPATIBILITY

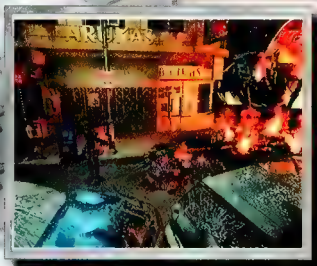
1or2 Players

GET INSIDE THE GAME!



MTV's GameBrain, the first official PlayStation strategy guide on home video, is your newest ammunition in mastering PlayStation's most popular games. Don't take your hands off the joystick to get gaming tips - just toggle between your VCR and game console! Armed with GameBrain's walk-throughs, maps and secret codes, you're on your way to virtual victory.





RE: DIRECTOR'S CUT

PUBLISHED AND DEVELOPED BY CAPCOM

Has it really been a year and a half since Resident Evil first shipped? It seems like only yesterday I was shotgunning zombies' heads off and squishing spiders underfoot and laughing at some of the worst voice acting in the history of the recorded voice. I mean, 18 months ago, the Spice Girls were just five unknown British chicks with big gazongas and no talent. (These days, of course, they're five RICH British chicks with big gazongas and no talent.)

It seems as though Capcom has almost been cursed by the multi-million-copy success of RE, though, because nothing they've done for the PlayStation, since, has been a hit. Star Gladiator, Mega Man 8, Buster Bros. Collection — all of them great fun, but none of them best-sellers. We wanted more zombies, dammit, and we wanted 'em now. Which presented a big problem for Capcom, as they had some difficulty getting the sequel under way.

What to do to satisfy our bloodlust in the meantime? First, they did something TRULY evil by halting production of the original game and jacking up demand. Then they made the semi-stunning announcement of Resident Evil Director's Cut (REDC), a reworked version of the original game, which would also include a playable demo of the long-awaited RE2, for a mere forty bucks. (If you count the five-dollar coupon for RE2, it's only $35.)

Indeed, REDC has three versions of the game on one disc: the "classic" Resident Evil, identical to the original release, an easier "beginner" version, identical to the Japanese version of Resident Evil and, the big draw, an "enhanced" and more difficult version of Resident Evil. This enhanced edition is loaded with "new" stuff, including restored gore in the full-motion video scenes, rearranged items and weapons, more and faster enemies, new camera angles in some rooms, and new outfits for our heroes, Jill Valentine and Chris Redfield.

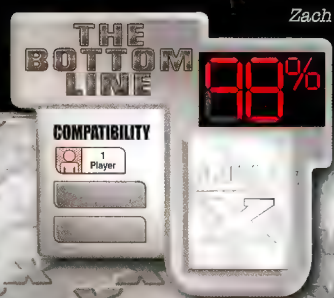
Alas, even the enhanced version isn't different enough to make me forget that I've played this game before. Yeah, the scattered items, gameplay twists and new graphics are cool, but not THAT cool, and not enough to make it seem like a brand-new experience. It's like watching a horror movie for the second time, if I may use a rotten analogy; you know when the psycho killer is going to jump out of the shadows, so the thrill factor drops to zero.

The RE2 demo, on the other hand, left me drooling the drool of amazement; the graphics are superb, the zombies are more frightening than ever, and most amazing of all, the voice acting continues to suck hard. But, will this demo keep gamers quiet until the game ships in early '98, or just make them even MORE psycho to play it? Hard to say.

To me, a "director's cut" means additional stuff, things we've never seen before, so why didn't Capcom add a few puzzles and/or items, such as the now-legendary oil can and pick axe (which were yanked from the original game, but revealed by an enterprising hacker and his Game Shark)? Maybe re-record some of the atrocious voice acting? Probably because that would take precious time better spent on completing the sequel.

If you've never played Resident Evil before, you should absolutely, positively buy this classic action/adventure game (and that's what my rating reflects, putting this game in the Platinum X category where it's long belonged). If you've already played the original, I don't see a reason to buy it, unless you're a HUGE fan, and don't mind laying down forty smackers for what is essentially a RE2 promotional package.

Zach



eat.

burp.

eat.

burp.

eat.

burp.

puke!

These guys know how to party.

RAMPAGE™ WORLD TOUR

PlayStation

MIDWAY

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NASCAR 98

PUBLISHED BY EA SPORTS AND DEVELOPED BY STORMFRONT STUDIOS

It's time to strap on another helmet, racing dudes (and dudettes), because EA Sports and Stormfront studios are bringing NASCAR 98 to the PlayStation. The game was developed by the same guys that did last year's decent racer, Andretti Racing. As you could choose from Indy cars or Stock cars in Andretti, Stormfront has elected to focus only on the stock cars of the NASCAR circuit this year and, in doing so, they've brought 17 new tracks to the game. There are a total of nine road courses and eight ovals, some of which are non-licensed courses designed just for the game (like the "Press Start 500"). The "official" tracks are pretty much exact replicas of the real ones, and there does seem to be a bit more color in these tracks than the "concrete jungle" look of last year's Andretti (more on that later).

Without a doubt, the ability to customize NASCAR 98 is what makes it such a good game and one with long term play value. You can set up values (in percentage) of your opponents strength, drafting effect, horsepower (compared to your opponents), car balance, and speed-sensitive steering. All of these choices are part of the "physics/AI" settings. You can also turn on/off the damage, yellow flag, and breakdown options. And the coolest feature? That would be the ability to change the percentage of the race that you want to compete in. For instance, you could race all 500 laps at Bristol, if you wanted to, or you could race a PERCENTAGE of that, like 10% (or 50 laps). NASCAR 98 thus becomes a game with many levels of intricacy; if you elect for longer races, you'll have to deal with more pit stops, more chances to wreck your car, and, well, more of everything! And should you go with shorter races, you'll have less time to grab the lead (or less time to hold onto it) and one spin out could cost you the race. Before each race, you can elect to change the tires, gear ratios, amount of down force, and oversteer, all in an effort to suit your car to the particular course you're racing — all standard fare, but, never the less, required.

Once you get into the actual racing part of NASCAR 98, you'll find all the driving characteristics very similar to Andretti, but boy, how the sound has improved! There's nothing like the rumble coming out of a 190 MPH stock car, and this year EA got that sound dialed in! For my tastes, there's still not enough voice from the crew chief or the crowds, but the "country fried rock" (or whatever y'all call it) musical selection works well.

NASCAR 98 is a solid racing title, but because of the less than inspirational graphics, it will not attain our highly regarded "Gold" status. The tracks, while plentiful and challenging, just don't grab your attention and the pop-up, while not horrid, is frequent enough to require some fixin'. Still, a fine racing experience and one that NASCAR fans will want to check out.

Eric

THE BOTTOM LINE

89%

COMPATIBILITY

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Analog Joystick Compatible

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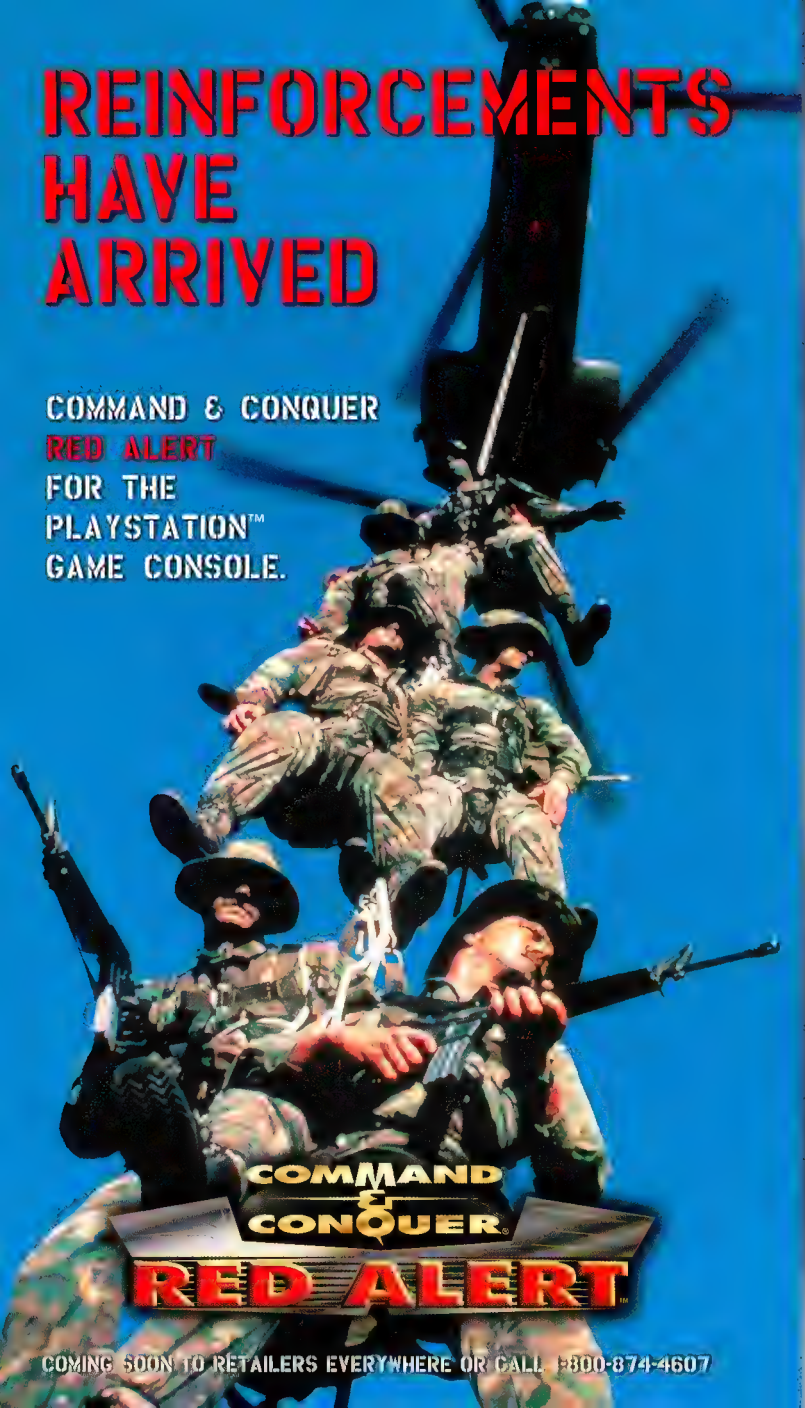

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PlayStation

TEEN
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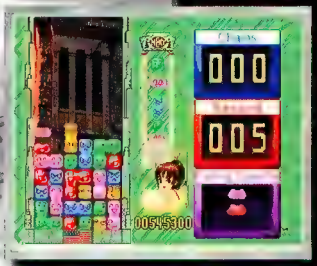
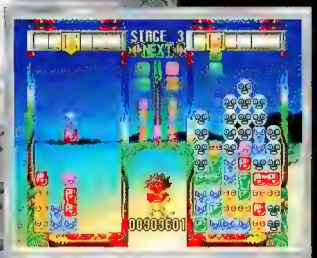
TECMO STACKERS

PUBLISHED AND DEVELOPED BY TECMO





"A Game of Chain Reactions" is the subtitle to this Tetris-style falling-thingamabob puzzle game from Tecmo (and, no, I still haven't learned why they inject the company name into all their product titles). And between the incredibly weird graphics, so-strange-it's-captivating music and hilariously broken English, Stackers is the goofiest PlayStation game I've played since — hell, it's just the goofiest PlayStation game, period.

In any of Stackers' four modes of play, the gameplay is very simple. Little colored squares, called Quads, fall, two at a time, into a chamber six Quads wide by 12 Quads high. You rotate and move the Quads to fall into colorful formations. When four or more Quads of the same color connect to each other vertically and/or horizontally, they explode. This causes any adjacent Quads to reach out with "arms" and try to link up with like-colored Quads. If four or more Quads connect this way, there's another explosion and another extension. With properly placed Quads, and a little luck, players can set off chain reactions of four, five, even six or more explosions. By causing chain reactions, you also cause blank Quads to fall onto your opponent's half of the screen, making it tougher for him to cause chain reactions of his own.

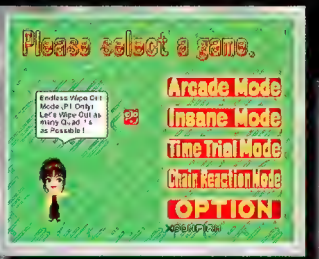
About those four modes of play: Arcade Mode ("This is the Arcade Mode, can you get to the final?", as the menu screen describes it) is for one or two players. In the one-player mode, you can play a three-stage practice mode or a normal or hard "course", with increasingly wise and wacky computer-controlled opponents. Insane Mode ("Endless Wipe Out Mode") is a never-ending (until you mess up) game of Quad-busting. Time Trial Mode ("'Hurry' Drop as many

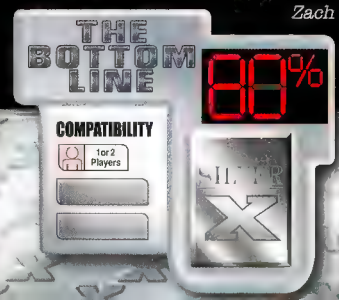
'Mystic Quad' as you can. Hustle!!!") sees how many Quads you can pop within a strict time limit. And the Chain Reaction Mode ("Hustle, go for the Maximum!!!") gives you a ridiculously tall chamber in which to drop Quads and set up the largest possible chain reaction; it's possible to achieve well upwards of 20 consecutive explosions.

So what's there to complain about, with a game this straightforward? Only two things. First, the music — and I use the word very loosely — is an incredibly heinous collection of a half-dozen pseudo-techno-jazz-pop compositions that make Daytona USA's "Let's go away!" theme tune sound like a masterwork of songcraft. Second, most Tetris-y games give you a "grace period" when you drop a piece into position, a half-second or so to shift the piece left or right, if your placement is off. Stackers' grace period is too short, resulting in misplaced pieces and slight frustration.

Stackers has mildly addictive gameplay, and it's good fun for two players. My feelings are best summed up by the words of one of the freaky characters in the game's demonstration mode: "Give it a try. You won't regret!"

Zach


Please select a game.
Endless Wipe Out Mode (P1 Only) Let's Wipe Out as many Quad 's as Possible !
Arcade Mode
Insane Mode
Time Trial Mode
Chain Reaction Mode
OPTION



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PGA TOUR 98

PUBLISHED BY EA SPORTS — DEVELOPED BY EA CANADA

Golf games generally don't create a lot of excitement in the console gaming world. Their success has mainly been limited to the PC market. Even with the more advanced capabilities of the 32-bit machines, golf has been a lackluster performer. EA Sports, Tecmo, Konami and Interplay have all produced golf games for the PlayStation and Accolade is due to bring their "Nicklaus" title out this winter. So, if they haven't performed well in the past, why do we still see new titles arriving every year? Simple. If it's done right, golf can be one of the most addicting video game experiences. This brings me to my latest assignment, PGA Tour 98, from EA Sports.

Golf is serious business here at Dimension Publishing; we are absolute fanatics. Every golf game that comes in here is immediately consumed like Homer Simpson devouring a dozen doughnuts ("Why do you have to be so perfect?"). The PGA series has long been a favorite, except for last year's version which was possibly the worst golf video game of all time. For 98, EA has spruced up the game a bit and added some new courses, five in all, and drastically improved the interface; but is it enough to make the game a keeper?

If you've played any of the previous PGA series, you will have no trouble jumping right into this latest offering. Mechanically, the game hasn't changed a bit. The venerable swing meter (still the easiest to use of all the games) has remained the same, as has the putting assistance and the reverse angle cameras. The only course returning from last year is the TPC at Sawgrass; the new courses include Pebble Beach, The Bay Hill Club, the TPC at Scottsdale and the Colonial Country Club. Additionally,

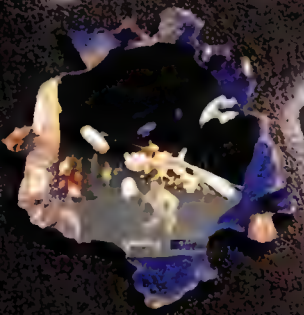
EA has added the commentary talents of Ernie Johnson, Jr. Stat tracking has been enhanced as well, to include longest drive, lowest(and highest) round and longest birdie streak, and three new game modes have also been added.

The big news here is what hasn't been added. After all these years, the game is still 2D. No matter how well this game plays, and it does play well, the outdated graphics immediately cause an "I've done this before" sensation. Even though it's nice to see new courses every year, ultimately it doesn't matter, because the game is still the same. Thankfully last year's user interface has been scrapped in favor of one more reminiscent of the PC, making this year's offering the easiest to use of all the console versions. PGA 98 is definitely the best golf game currently available for the PlayStation, but one that could stand a significant face lift and possibly a major addition to the player's list (after all, someone's going to get the Tiger license). Ultimately it boils down to this, if you don't own any other golf game for the Playstation, PGA Tour 98 is a good choice; however, if you're looking for something revolutionary, you'll have to wait a little longer.

Alex

ADMIT IT.

Sometimes you'd feel better if you could just shoot every damn thing in sight.



(BUT THEN THERE'S THAT DEATH PENALTY THING.)

Time to lock and load, pal. Straight from arcades everywhere, here comes Maximum Force. It's you against diabolic terrorists and you control the body count. You'll board helicopters, ATVs, underwater vehicles and shoot literally everything in sight. Gun down skinheads on three completely different missions. Blast your way into more than 30 secret rooms (three times as many as Area 51) and blow everything away with extreme prejudice. With Maximum Force, there's no such thing as too much firepower. Go ahead, pull the trigger.

MAXIMUM FORCE

PULL THE TRIGGER

MIDWAY

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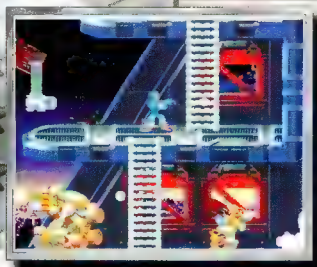
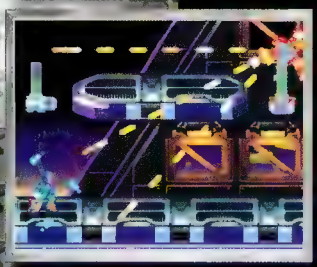
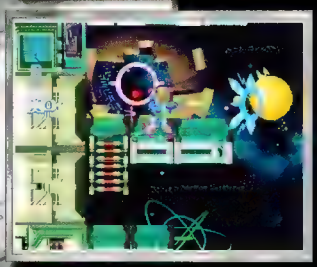
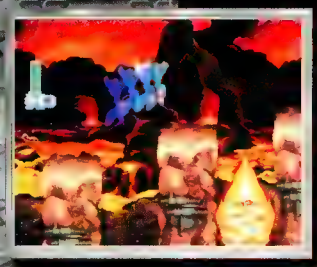
MEGA MAN X4

PUBLISHED AND DEVELOPED BY CAPCOM









Okay, okay, he's ten years old this year, so chances are good that you're already familiar with the classic Mega Man style of gameplay. If you've been playing games over the last decade, you've more than likely picked up on a few of his adventures, so by now you either love 'em or hate 'em. While the various Mega Man games have always been wildly successful in Japan, the response has never been quite the same here, attracting a smaller (but rabidly fierce) fan base in the States.

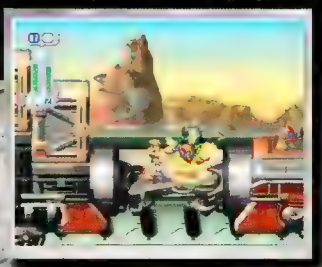
X4 finds our heroes Mega Man X and Zero embroiled in yet another robotic uprising, masterminded once again by Sigma — sorry to blow the major plot twist for you, but Sigma's return is about as unexpected as Dr. Wily's. It would have been nice if Capcom had tossed in a new villain, to challenge Mega Man X, but I guess if it ain't broke... Seems like enemy robot designs are running a little thin these days as well; soldiers like Frozen Walrus, Split Mushroom and Cyber Peacock, Sigma's army hardly strike fear into the hearts of mortal men.

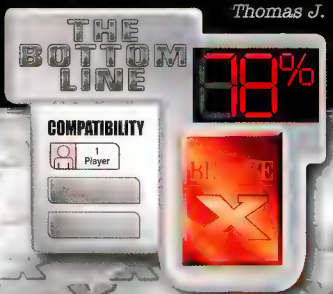
Like X3, the player is given the choice to play as either X or Zero. In the last game the player was only allowed to use Zero for the duration of the level, and not face off against a boss. However, in this outing, the game is split into two separate story lines, which is almost justification for the short levels. Mega Man X, as always, has the ability to snag the defeated boss' special weapon, but Zero can only learn a new attack with his sword. While definitely a new facet to the game - and any new additions are appreciated these days - Zero ends up being a particularly frustrating character to play, since

his special attacks have no range, forcing you to get up close and personal with each enemy boss. Zero is Mega Man without a gun, and the lack of a distance attack makes no sense.

X4 is enjoyable, but not as entertaining as the previous game. X3 was filled with additional side quests and secrets that had you much more involved in the game, an aspect which is sorely lacking in this adventure. The levels, themselves, also seem shorter than normal, which may be a result of having to load off the CD. Although I'm admittedly a huge Mega Man fan, I found myself somewhat disappointed with the brevity of X4, which I managed to blow through in two successive nights of playing. It seems that Capcom is running low on original ideas for robotic adversaries, which may be indicative of the series altogether. On the whole, X4 is a fun game, but there haven't been any dramatic improvements in the series, since jumping platforms from SNES to PSX. I guess we'll have to wait patiently for Mega Man Neo, to see what the future really has in store for the Blue Bomber.

Thomas J.





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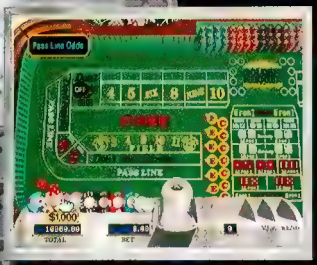
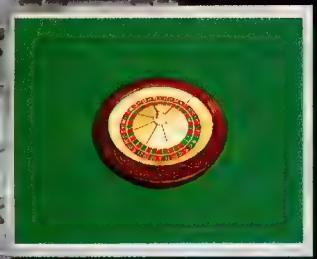
GOLDEN NUGGET

PUBLISHED BY VIRGIN — DEVELOPED BY POINT OF VIEW





Well, it's about time! It's been over two years since the PlayStation launched and, until now, we haven't had a single game that simulated the joys of losing hundreds and thousands of dollars to heartless blackjack dealers and soulless video poker machines. Thank you, Virgin Interactive!

Okay, I'm being a touch sarcastic. It seems like there are always one or two gambling games, for a video game system, going back to the Atari 2600 days, and the PlayStation is the latest to get one. But, really, what is the POINT? The thrill of gambling is that you're putting your hard-earned cash on the line. With a gambling video game, if you blow your wad, you just load in your saved game and start over. And if you win a virtual jackpot — well, in the real world, you're still down the $50 you paid for the game. I guess if you wanted to practice casino gaming before a real-life trip to Sin City, a gambling game would be a decent idea, but then you'd just rent it, wouldn't you?

But let's start the review before I turn this page into a gambling-game manifesto. Golden Nugget has two modes of play. The first is a standard walk-around-the-casino-and-slowly-lose-your-shirt mode, where you can play any of the Golden Nugget's 14 games, including (deep breath) baccarat, blackjack, craps, keno, poker, roulette, slot machines and video poker.

The tournament mode is a "quest", of sorts, in which you're given an initial stake of $10,000 and various monetary goals to reach. Achieve each moolah milestone and you're invited to participate in a high-stakes poker tournament. You also get to watch segments of full-motion video (starring TV's old-school Batman, Adam West) that detail the story of a stolen computer chip with the power to predict any random event-such as, say, the result of a roulette spin. The FMV scenes are horribly written and acted, except for West, who is fun to watch in a sick way as he strains to see the cue cards and puts Shatner-like pauses into his line readings.

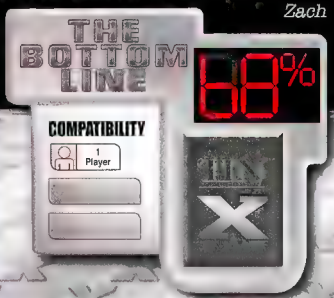
(At one point, Virgin was planning to yank the FMV out entirely, but that would've been a mistake; the video clips, at least, give the player a bit of incentive to gamble with nonexistent cash.)

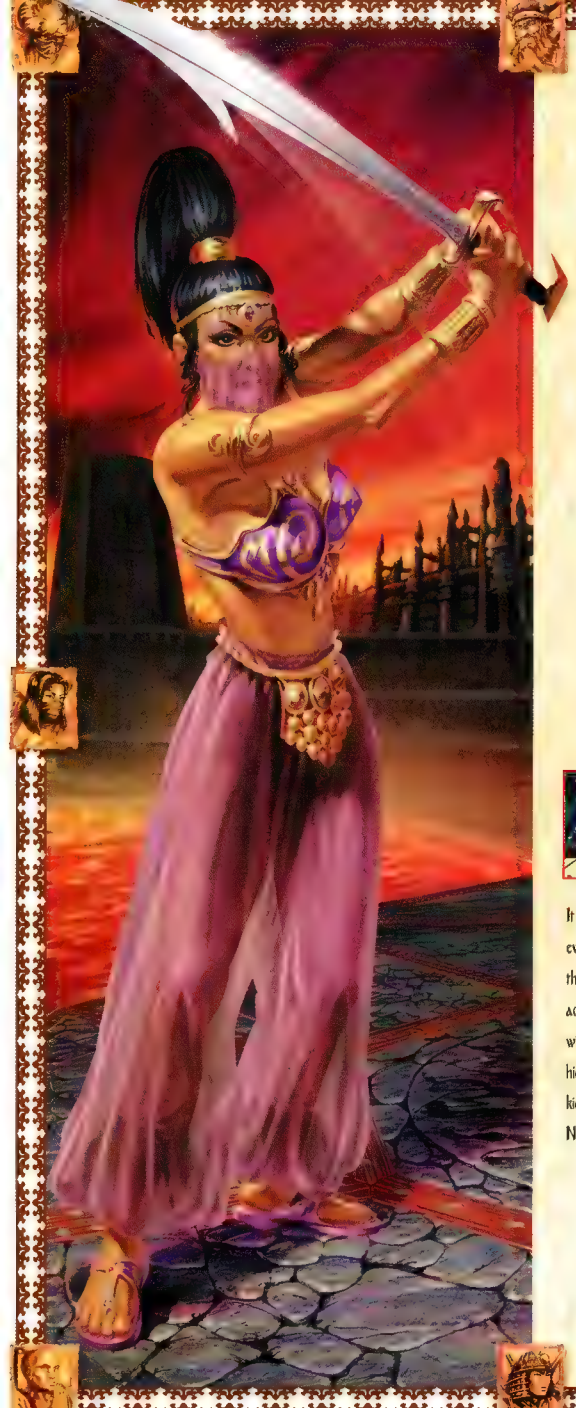
As a veteran of many trips to Sin City, let me tell ya that the highlight of the game is a 3D virtual representation of the Golden Nugget's casino floor which is pixel-perfect. It really does look just like this. And the graphics for the various games, while not spectacular, are quite functional.

What Golden Nugget is seriously lacking is any kind of personality. For example, when you're walking around the casino floor, you don't see ANYONE else. No dealers, no players, nothing. I assure you, even in the middle of the night, there's always SOMEONE tooling around a Las Vegas casino. And when you're playing at a table, you only see flashes of other people's hands and hear the same disembodied voices (which don't match the voices of the FMV actors in the tournament mode — very sloppy); you never see their faces. Accolade released a card game for the Commodore 64 over ten years ago (Card Sharks, he says with an authoritative tone) loaded with more fun and personality than this.

If you're a gambling fiend, with a burning desire to see Adam West emote, Golden Nugget is like manna from heaven. Otherwise, don't bother.

Zach





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She'll break your heart.
Crush your bones.
Kick you into a lava pit.
Then she'll sneer at your weapon.

(And she's one of the nice ones.)

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MACE
The Dark Age

EVERYTHING'S A WEAPON.

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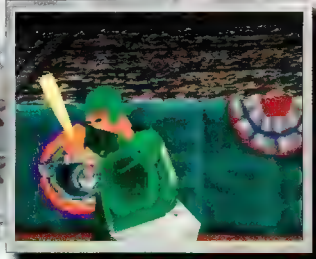
NINTENDO 64

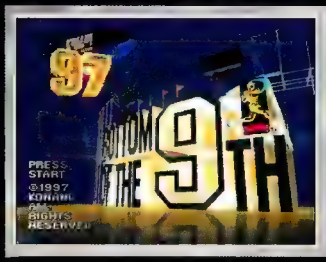
PlayStation

MATURE 17+

BOTTOM OF THE 9TH 97

PUBLISHED AND DEVELOPED BY KONAMI



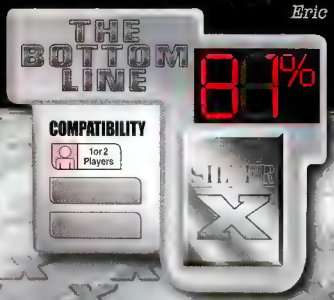


"Better late than never" must be the thinking over at Konami right now, 'cause Bottom of the 9th '97 has finally arrived — a full 3-6 months after the competition. Yes, the summer of '97 has already seen the release of MLB 98 (Gold), Triple Play 98 (Gold), VR Baseball '97 (Silver), Grand Slam Baseball (Bronze), and All-Star Baseball '97 (Bronze). B9 '97 may indicate the arrival of the SIXTH baseball game, but it's truly the first one that leans heavier on the arcade aspects than on the simulation side of the game.

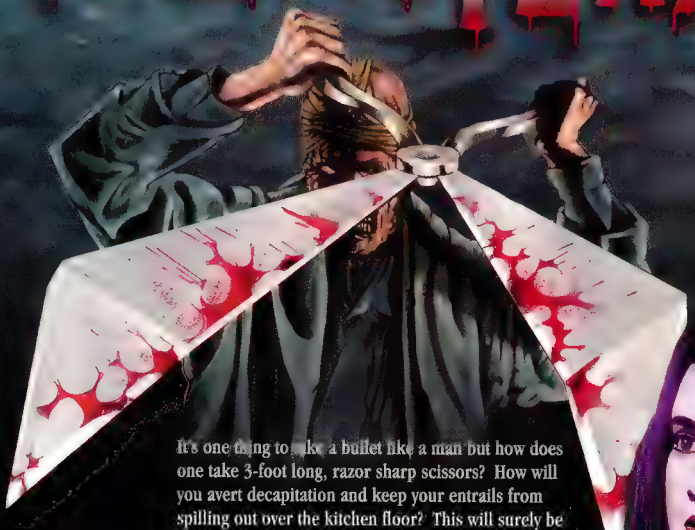
At first glance, Konami's new title left me with the kind of impression you get when looking at a bowl of soggy cereal — you know, like it would have tasted much better a little while ago. The polygonal characters are still way too chunky, although not as bad as they were last year, but no where near as smooth and detailed as MLB 98 or TP 98. The players reminded me of the polygon guys in Konami's In The Zone 2, with the squared off look and texture wrapped faces on the players. Each team has their marquee players identified by the inclusion of their "look" painted onto their faces (Albert Belle has a wonderful scowl on his mug). Most of the players have a similar build, although there are skinny guys, medium sizers, and Rick Reuschel-esque physiques (who did Canseco piss off to get that body??). There are lots of different batting and pitching (or Nomo) animations for certain players, although there are only two types of throwing in the field: the side arm fling for the infielders (and occasional short distance outfield throw) and the "wind-up" type throw for long throws from the outfielders. Odd, to say the least. There are head first and feet first slides, lunges for shoe string type catches (and subsequent somersaults), one knee catches, and jumps and dives. However, most of these things occur without you having to press a specific button (except dive and jump) — the computer just determines how you should field the ball based (I guess) on your proximity to the ball at the time of the catch. Speaking of this, when playing on "manual" fielding, and in the outfield, in particular, the collision detection is not as precise as we would like it to be. You often find yourself diving to get to a ball that you should normally field, and then the dive causes the ball to roll under your player (and usually all the way to the wall). The stadiums (15 to choose from) are all graphically pleasing, and the color of the dirt and grass is probably the nicest of all the baseball games available. Even without a MLB license (only players — no teams), all cities are represented and there's even a couple of "fantasy" teams.

Although a bit on the quirky side, B9 '97 is a refreshing pace of play for baseball fans, and a game that may appeal to those of you not looking for too serious of a baseball game.

Eric



SHEAR TERROR



It's one thing to take a bullet like a man but how does one take 3-foot long, razor sharp scissors? How will you avert decapitation and keep your entrails from spilling out over the kitchen floor? This will surely be your fate unless you can outwit Norway's most lethal killer–Scissorman. You'll have to become a master of stealth and deception to avoid being cut to ribbons in this blood-soaked horror adventure.

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CLOCK TOWER™

ASCII ENTERTAINMENT

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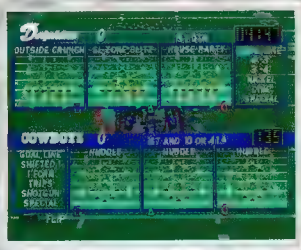
PlayStation™

MATURE M
CONTENT RATED BY E.S.R.B.

JIMMY JOHNSON FOOTBALL

PUBLISHED BY INTERPLAY DEVELOPED BY GAMETEK



Interplay/VR Sports' "VR Football 98 With Jimmy Johnson" has been kicking around for a couple of years. It began its life as a Konami product, courtesy of former publisher — now development studio Gametek. Ah, but that was only on the PlayStation. It seems Gametek also did a deal with Sega to produce this game as the first, and only, Sega-published NFL title on the Saturn. Konami backed out of the project last year, followed shortly by Interplay's acquisition of the title and subsequent re-working of the game. Thus concludes our short history lesson; was it worth Interplay's efforts? Probably not...

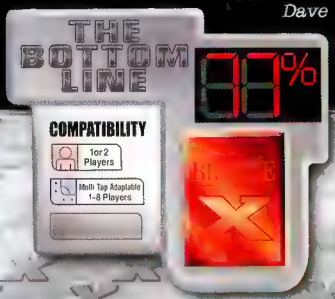
The Interplay/VR Sports people have tried to do all of the right things with JJ Football — including both NFL and Players, Inc. licenses, getting Jimmy's name on it in an effort to combat the brand recognition of EA Sports' Madden NFL 98, and adding all of the season play/statistical/player management features that we football purists love to see. They clearly have Madden in their sights (83%/Silver in our October issue) but, for all of its features, JJ lacks the key ingredient to make the game successful... fun.

The problem is that you really never get in any kind of rhythm in this game. The sprite-based characters look decent — comparable to Madden's but far from the polygon standard set by GameDay 98 (98%/Platinum in our October issue). The gameplay is straight forward enough and play-calling is easy to get into, but there's no "juice" — no energy behind the product. The three different camera angles have a hard time keeping up with the deep ball — to the point where your receivers run off of the screen and you are

left to blindly decide which icon will receive the pass. Once you chuck it, it's pretty much up for grabs. There is an offensive-player controlled camera, but it doesn't remedy the problem. Also, the playbook is woefully inadequate — featuring a paltry 35 plays on offense and 30 plays on defense (not including Special Team play). Flipping them doubles the count, but leaves the total far short of the two competitors mentioned above.

Don't get me wrong, it's not that JJ Football is a BAD game, it isn't. It's just that the game is average. I found it difficult to keep interest in my season and ended up finishing play after 11 games. I get the feeling that Interplay felt the same way. They kept working this game and working this game, hoping that their efforts would bear fruit and that JJ Football would become a better product, when compared to its humble beginnings. It DID get better, just not good enough to play with the big boys. GameDay 98 is an exceptional game; Madden 98 is a fair game with solid presentation; VR Sports Football 98 with Jimmy Johnson is simply average.

Dave



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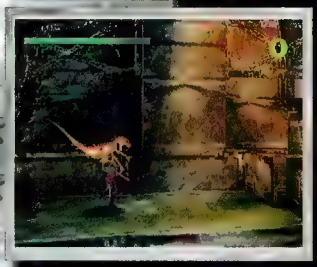
THE LOST WORLD

PUBLISHED BY ELECTRONIC ARTS — DEVELOPED BY DREAMWORKS



Based on the mega-grossing movie sequel (as if Steven Spielberg didn't already have whatever money Bill Gates didn't), The Lost World: Jurassic Park is another "3D" action/platform game that's actually a 2D platform game with 3D graphics. (The game originally looked like it would ship simultaneously with the movie release, a first for a video game, but that accomplishment went to Disney's Hercules.) It is also a disappointing debut, not because of the lack of originality, but because of a litany of small and medium-sized gameplay flaws.

The gameplay is very much of the classic run-and-jump variety; you run to the right, kill or avoid creatures in your way, and jump over chasms and onto platforms. There are also several points at which, a la Pandemonium!, you can branch off onto multiple paths (although it's difficult to tell where the multiple paths start and end in each level).

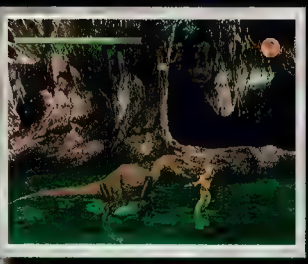
As you start playing The Lost World, you very quickly notice its main problem: it is freakin' HARD. Now, usually, I love a challenge, but in this case, it's too far over the top. For example, in the compy levels, the first tiny dinos you encounter take five or six hits to be killed, and give you almost no energy back when you beat and eat them. But the larger dinos, later on, which only take a few hits to die, sap a third of your energy meter with a single whack, and also give you almost no energy in return. And in the raptor levels, the humans can withstand a ridiculous number of attacks before dying.

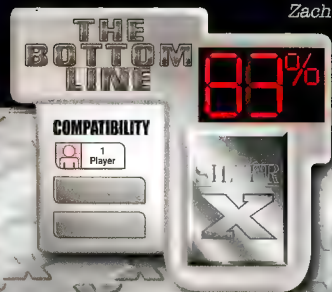
It gets worse. There are no checkpoints in a stage, so you have to get through each one in a single shot. And when you lose all your lives and continue, you don't start at the last stage you reached; you start at the beginning of the current world (group of stages). In other words, you have to play for 20-30 minutes just to return to the stage where you croaked last time, get a LITTLE further into that stage, croak again, and repeat the process. NOTHING is more frustrating than going through the same level over and over.

Yes, the graphics are absolutely gorgeous, rivaling Crash Bandicoot for sheer beauty. The dinosaurs' "Morf-X" animation looks great, and the T-Rex is a marvel. I remember dreaming about controlling the T-Rex from the PlayStation Demo Disc I got when I reserved my PlayStation two Septembers ago, and now I can. The music is also superb; some people have mistakenly thought it's the John Williams movie score when it's actually a guy named Michael Giacchino. Good work, my friend! And the sound effects are straight-from-the-movie awesome; the T-Rex's roar is loud enough to loosen the bowels of even the most manly gamer.

The Lost World is a good game that gets considerably better once you struggle past the Compy levels. With some gameplay and difficulty tweaking, it would've been Gold, but the numerous flaws drag this promising title down into the mid-Silver range. Let's hope DreamWorks is able to learn from their mistakes with The Lost World, when we see their next inevitable tie-in game.

Zach





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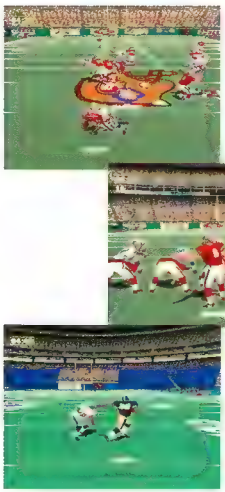

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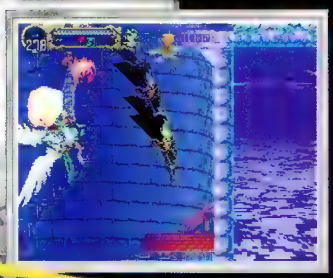
CASTLEVANIA

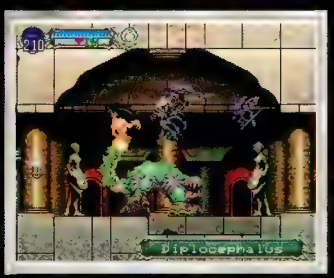
PUBLISHED BY KONAMI — DEVELOPED BY KCET



I could pontificate about the merits of 2D versus 3D. I could ramble endlessly about the lush animation, awesome character design, strikingly beautiful backgrounds and stunning soundtrack. The truth is, none of that matters. I strongly believe that a game's rating should be based on how much fun it is to play. All the rest is fluff, and should only affect the score by one or two points, plus or minus, at most. So, the question that must be burning in your mind... is Castlevania: Symphony of the Night, fun? Well, let me tell you all about it.

The game starts off with you in control of Richter Belmont, on your way to the final battle with Count Choc... err... Dracula. Basically, you're picking up where the (obscure) PC Engine version of Castlevania left off... you must defeat Dracula with your puny weapons or suffer eternally. Lucky for you, this time, your battle against the big blood sucker can't be lost. If you lose all your health, your favorite babe, Maria, charges in to pump you up with go-juice, making you invulnerable. Whoopie! Oh well, it's still kinda fun to go back later and try beating Drac without getting hit, once you've gotten yourself re-familiarized with the controls.

After dispatching the Count, your time controlling Richter ends and the stage is set a few years into the future, where Alucard, son of Dracula, rushes onto the scene, ready to kick some undead booty. Yessir, you read that right, the son of

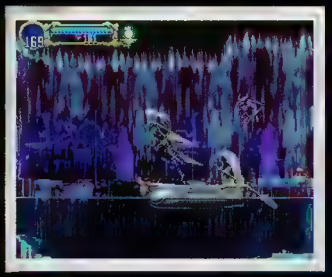


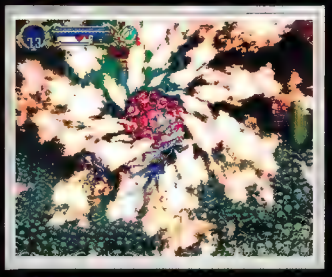
Dracula. Here's the deal: every time some Belmont pummels Drac (destroying his castle in the process), that pesky castle just re-materializes 100 years later and before you know it, Drac's back, sporting fancier outfits and a big parcel of new minons ready to suicidally run themselves into Belmont weapons in a futile effort to keep you from, once again, doing the death dance with the master. Strangely, this time, the castle is back even earlier than usual, by about 95 years! Enough is enough cries the young, handsome (albeit a bit fem), human-loving vampire. Daddy's gotten too evil in his golden years and that Maria babe is just too hot to turn into an undead blood guzzler. Time to put a stop to the mayhem and send old Pops back to hell once and for all, curing him of the disease he calls a life. And so the fun begins!

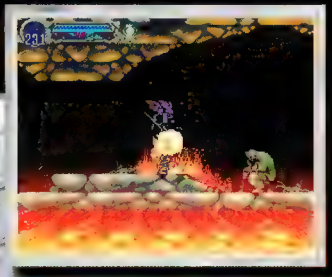
This is the game you had always dreamed about, back when you owned a Super NES, and envisioned what games on the Super NES "2" would be like... Imagine taking all the best elements of Metroid and merging them with Castlevania, adding a few RPG elements like gold, hit points, magic points, spells, weapons, armor, food, shops, experience points, etc... and you've got Castlevania X. The level designs are VERY Metroid-esqe. The map screen looks nearly identical, and the way you open up new areas of the castle works nearly the same way.

As Alucard, you start off with a gnarly compliment of weapons and armor, with which you simply ruin all who stand in

EX RATED







your way. But, alas, shortly into the game, Death himself shows up to relieve you of your goodies, leaving you to fight with only bare fists and shoddy duds. The mission from there is simple. Kill, talk to Maria, kill some more, and make your way to the top of the castle to see what evil mechanisms are once again reviving Dracula. I won't give the secret away, but let me say that, when you finally arrive at the top to take care of the problem, don't. The real problem lies elsewhere in the castle. Keep exploring. When you've finally completed 100% of the map and taken care of the real enemy, the game is only half done... I love that!

When you get down to it, what really makes a game like this fun is the exploration, encountering awesome bosses and figuring out how to kill them, finding secret areas, building up your strength with tons of new weapons, armor, special items and new powers, fighting techniques and allies... pretty much the same stuff that appeals to RPG fans. Heck, there's more weapons to find along your quest than I've seen in any RPG in a long time. Added to this is the action/platform element which, while not as complex as dedicated platformers, plays very well. The control over your character is very smooth, precise and easy to get used to. They've even thrown in some "Street Fighter 2" type moves, that perform special attacks or call forth creatures to fight beside you. Amazing!

So, along with all the praise, there are still some negative points. For one, the game is too easy. I beat the game with 200.6% of the map complete in 32 hours of mostly exploration. Fighting the various bosses and enemies wasn't much of a challenge. While they were very cool to look at, and had a lot of variety in their attacks, if I used a couple of very strong items, they were short work. Another point that could be considered either bad or good, is that even with 200.6% of the game explored, there were still TONS of weapons and items to be found, and only found by killing certain enemies after you've managed to raise your luck level past a certain point. This could be considered a reason to keep playing the game, but it's really not that much fun to just play to find the items when, once found, they're useless when you've already killed all the bosses.

Bottom line... If a game makes me want to play it so much I set aside all other responsibilities: working, eating, venturing to the outside world... it's Gold.

Tim

THE BOTTOM LINE

PS EXTREME — **90%**

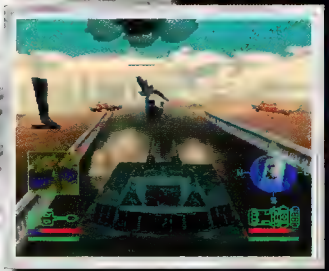
COMPATIBILITY

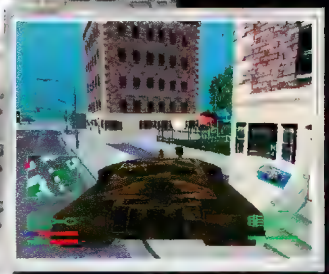
1 Player

When you get down to it, what really makes a game like this fun is the exploration, encountering awesome bosses and figuring out how to kill them, finding secret areas, building up your strength with tons of new weapons, armor, special items and new powers, fighting techniques and allies... pretty much the same stuff that appeals to RPG fans... Bottom line... If a game makes me want to play it so much I set aside all other responsibilities: working, eating, venturing to the outside world... it's Gold.

STEEL REIGN

PUBLISHED BY SONY — DEVELOPED BY CHANTEMAR CREATIONS

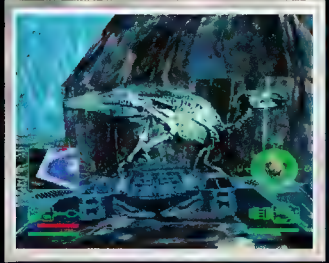




Quick, name the last really good tank game made for any system. Still thinking aren't you? It took me a while to come up with a few as well. The bottom line is, there hasn't been many worth remembering. "Assault Rigs", along with the inclusion of "Assault" on Namco's Museum 4 and Battlezone on Midway's Atari's Greatest hits, are the only decent tank games to show up since the original "Combat" on the Atari 2600. Some of you out there are probably saying, hey what about "Return Fire"? The answer there is, Return Fire was more of a strategy game and you used more than just tanks. So, you'd have to say that the market is "wide open" for a quality tank based shooter.

Steel Reign, has quietly made its way into most of the gaming publications, but really hasn't garnered much attention. After all, there are tons of shooters available and tank games aren't as sexy as, say, something like a "Tomb Raider 2" or a "G-Police." Be that as it may, this game has "sleeper" written all over it. The game is story based, but ultimately boils down to rock-'em sock-'em tank destruction. For those of you that just have to know, however, the story goes something like this.

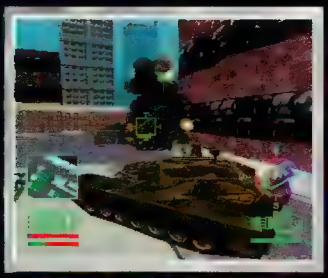
A new breed of supertanks has been developed under your direction. However, while you've been working

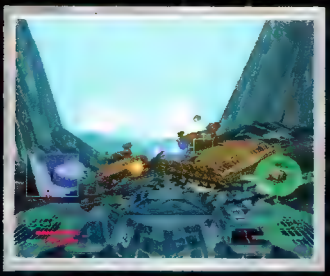


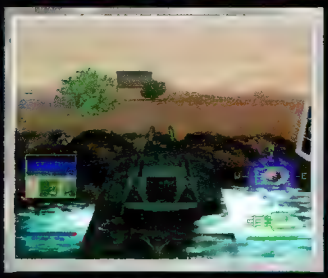
like a dog, day and night for the man, your nemesis has united a bunch of militia "patriots" to help attempt an overthrow of the country's government. So, now, it's up to you to set things straight by wasting the enemy and returning the seat of power back to the rightful government. You do this, of course, with one of your new supertanks and a lot of power-ups.

The game is laid out over ten different levels, or battlegrounds if you prefer, allowing you to experience the thrill of victory in city streets, forests, icy mountains and deserts. Each level is generously sprinkled with power ups to keep you adequately supplied during the war, and there are three different camera angles from which to view the destruction. The most interesting is the Missile Cam™ that allows you to guide the missile and view the destruction up close and personal. The game is laid out like most tank games of the past, in that you go through the levels fighting off the advancing tanks and looking for your assigned targets. You do this with a variety of supertanks (10 in all) that you gain access to as you progress through the game. Where Steel Reign is different is in the look of the game and the complex gameplay. Through the games use of "Real Terrain Technology", the topography is intensely realistic. You actually get a feel for the terrain as you are driving. This definitely helps when

EX RATED







you are selecting your route of attack. It also makes for the most realistic graphics ever seen in this type of game. Ultimately, however, what's truly going to set Steel Reign apart is its gameplay.

Like most shooters, the bulk of your activity requires your finger to be on a trigger. Steel Reign, however, is a little different. Don't get me wrong, there's plenty to shoot at, including a number of menacing helicopters that never seem to go away; it's just that it requires quite a bit of strategy to use all of your assets to their fullest extent. As you progress through the different levels, you will require the use of a limited supply of different power ups. If you use them too soon, you'll run out when they're needed most; if you wait too long, your stay on planet Steel Reign will be a short one, indeed. Additionally, the route to your ultimate target is not always a direct one, and using the radar isn't enough to get you there; you have to do some exploration to be able to find the correct route. As you can see, this isn't your father's tank game!

Steel Reign has done a great job of separating itself from the rest of the crowd. The game is absolutely huge and will require an enormous amount of time to conquer it. The

action is non stop, and has enough variety to keep you guessing throughout the game. Graphically, it's the best we've seen in this type of game, and the strategy required, to be successful, will guarantee a high replayability factor.

If you've been waiting for a great tank combat experience, wait no more. Steel Reign is graphically excellent, with addictive gameplay that stands up to repeated play sessions.

Alex

THE BOTTOM LINE

PS EXTREME

92%

COMPATIBILITY

1or2 Players

Analog Joystick Compatible

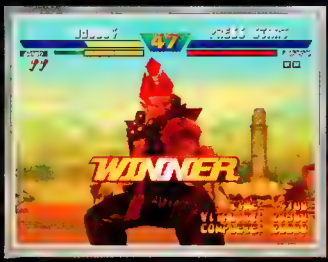
If you've been waiting for a great tank combat experience, wait no more. Steel Reign is graphically excellent, with addictive gameplay that stands up to repeated play sessions.

STREET FIGHTER EX+α

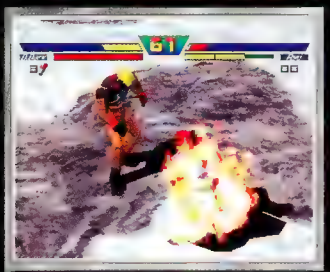
PUBLISHED BY CAPCOM AND DEVELOPED BY ARIKA

While Street Fighter EX Plus Alpha is not Capcom's first foray into the realm of 3D fighting — Star Gladiator holds that dubious honor — it is the first time that the SF characters have not been animated in the famous Capcom art style. Star Gladiator was a true 3D game, with the fighters able to move through six degrees of freedom, but the argument was that, without the standard style of gameplay, EX would not seem like a real Street Fighter. To appease critics and players alike, Capcom has taken the easy way out and released a 2D game with 3D characters, which actually works quite nicely. So while you finally get to see Ryu, Chun Li, Zangief, Guile, Ken, Dhalsim, Sakura, Akuma and Bison rendered in three dimensional polys, they brawl in the same fashion as their 2D counterparts in the Street Fighter collection.

Instead of completely reinventing the wheel, Street Fighter EX goes straight for the fan favorite and plays almost exactly like Super Street Fighter II Turbo, considered by most to be the best of the various SF fighting engines. This means tight gameplay, honest combo systems (unlike the crazy multi-hit combos in most fighters), the removal of air blocking, super combos, and a serious ramping of computer difficulty. In fact, EX would be a great game even if it wasn't 3D. After having spent some time (and a considerable amount of tokens) with Street Fighter 3, I can honestly say that EX is a better title than its long awaited cousin.



Die-hard fans will undoubtedly miss the artwork and animation that Capcom is known for. The polygon characters aren't too bad, but are definitely of a lower quality than the company's traditional 2D anime style. Akuma and Bison, in particular, are looking their meanest ever, while other characters, such as Zangief get the short end of the stick. The poor Russian has always been neck-in-neck with Blanka for the ugly prize, but this unfortunate 3D inception makes him resemble nothing more than a huge, hairy block of Spam, with weird big pink veins running all across his body. Creepy. The backgrounds for the various stages are also blah - low resolution 2D drawings that look totally out of place with the rest of the game. Small computer effects enhance the overall visual effects in the game, such as the running water in Dr. Dark's sewer stage, the ripple in the air caused by Dhalsim's teleport and Bison's glowing boots and gauntlets. Capcom also went the Tekken route for the endings of each character — unique computer graphic "movies" that showcase the victorious fighter in highly rendered, albeit very grainy, form.



More than just another simple arcade port, the "Plus Alpha" portion of the game's title comes from all the extras that have been included. The home version of EX sports twice the arcade version's amount of fighters. EX has a gaggle of new fighters for players to familiarize themselves with: Skullomania, Doctrine Dark, Cracker Jack, Darun, Blair, Garuda, Hokuto, Allen, Pullum Purna and the two cybernetic Cycloids, bringing the number of fighters up to an incredible 22! This contingent of pugilists should keep you and your buddies occupied with beating the crap out of each other for quite some time.

There are several different flavors of gameplay to choose from in EX as well: the classic Arcade mode, Team Battle, Vs., Survival Mode, Time Attack, Watch mode, and Practice mode. While most people tend to blow off Practice modes, SF EX's bears checking out. On the Expert version of Practice, as you complete the various moves for each character, you unlock all sorts of secret goodies, which you can then save onto your memory card. Completing an Expert training session may give you the option to play as Cycloid Alpha or Evil Ryu, or you may even be able to try your hand in a 3D version of the classic barrels bonus stage from the early Street Fighters. You can also save the various CG rendered ending movies on your memory card for later repeat viewings.

In a bout of severe bad timing, Capcom is releasing Street Fighter EX Plus Alpha, the long delayed Marvel Super Heroes, and the classic Street Fighter Collection disc — three fighting games, each with virtually the same style of play. While there definitely is an argument to be made for picking up all three games, each with their own merits and flaws, you may not have $120 burning a hole in your pocket. I would strongly suggest picking up Street Fighter EX, a fighting game so good that it will satisfy even the most critical of gamers. EX is an excellent title, and the move into the third dimension is a good omen for both Capcom, in general, and the Street Fighter series, especially considering the excellence of this first attempt.

Thomas J.

PS EXTREME — THE BOTTOM LINE

98%

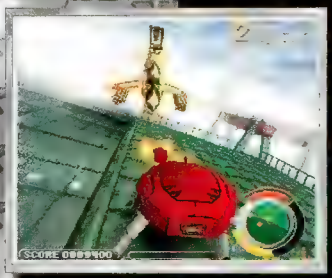
COMPATIBILITY

1 or 2 Players

I would strongly suggest picking up Street Fighter EX, a fighting game so good that it will satisfy even the most critical of gamers. EX is an excellent title, and the move into the third dimension is a good omen for both Capcom, in general, and the Street Fighter series, especially considering the excellence of this first attempt.

GHOST IN THE SHELL

PUBLISHED BY T*HQ AND DEVELOPED BY EXACT



A year or two back, Manga Entertainment made a push into American movie theaters with the ultra-hip "Ghost In Shell," one of the first full-length animated Japanese features since the staggering "Akira" (another Manga-licensed flick) to get any sort of big screen treatment in the States. "Ghost" is an incredible feature, based on Masamune Shirow's Japanese comic book series. Incredible art, amazing animation and tons of explosive action more than made up for the plot of the movie, which tended to drag in places as the characters become enmeshed in occasional bouts of angst-ridden soul searching.

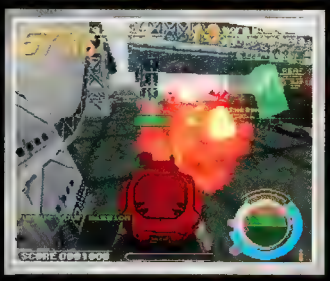
"Ghost in the Shell", for the PlayStation, distributed in the US by T*HQ, is closer in style to the comic book than the anime. Your character is "Major" Motoko Kusanagi, a cybernetically enhanced female agent of Section 9, the high-tech police force that patrols the futuristic city in which "Ghost" is set. "Major" has enhanced her brain and body with cybernetic implants, which allow her to jack-in to any computer network on Earth, as well as giving her the ability to bond with her bad mofo mini-tank. Major works closely with two other agents: Bateau, the big dude with the cybernetic eyes, and Togusa, one of the few unaltered humans working in Section 9, both of whom appear in the cut scenes.

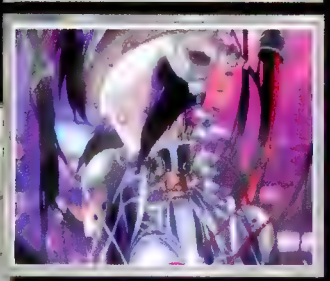
"Ghost In the Shell" utilizes the team of talented artists responsible for the anime feature for all in-game cut scenes. And the anime they have produced will blow you away; ten whole minutes of brand new, amazing Japanime video, crisp and clear, will come roaring out of your TV with the punch of the special 3D Stereo effects. The game itself has been designed and produced by the nutty

geniuses responsible for the Jumping Flash! series of PlayStation games. The Jumping Flash! team has created another amazing high-speed 3D engine. The gameplay puts you squarely in command of a high-tech, one woman mini-tank; part spider, part crab, and all trouble. Gameplay takes place in third-person perspective, so it's not quite a corridor shooter like Jumping Flash! or Doom. Comparisons to Jumping Flash! will be inevitable, but "Ghost" is a radically different style of game, so don't expect happy animals and pastel environments.

The main difference between "Ghost" and the majority of shooters out there is the mini-tank's ability to run along any surface — floor, walls, or ceiling — resulting in a wild new style of game, effectively quadrupling the surface area available for you to scoot across. The tank itself is an amazingly quick little machine, scuttling around streets, up sides of buildings, across bridges, over platforms and into problems almost faster than your brain can keep up. The twin machine guns mounted on the front of the tank discharge a continuous stream of lead into enemies and objects as quickly as you can pump the fire button, producing some very gratifying explosions. Of course, there's also the prototypical video game grenade to be picked up, that wipes out enemies with a satisfying smart-bomb explosion. Your little tank also comes equipped with side-to-side strafing jets that will boost you quickly out of the line of fire.

You are immediately thrust into a number of tank combat mission-based levels. Mission objectives are straight forward — they usually involve piloting your mini-tank while using your radar to hunt down and blow up the objective targets on each level, followed by a scrap with a huge boss





robot. There are alternate types of gameplay as well, such as the auto-scrolling ocean level, where your tank sits atop a giant jet ski while being attacked from all sides, or the high speed race through the city's downtown freeway system, and my personal favorite: a great level, called "The Invisible Shadow", where you jam through the city tracking a rogue cyborg that has the ability to cloak itself with "optical camouflage", which renders it virtually invisible until it de-cloaks to attack. While cloaked, you have to listen very carefully for the sound of the robot's running, and even see ripples as it passes through water! The various levels tend to fly by rapidly — I managed to blast my way up to Level 8 in a little more than 45 minutes, before having to give my thumbs a break — and can get a little repetitive (find target, shoot target, find next target), but there tends to be enough enemies blasting at you to keep you focused.

A quick run through the Training Level will help even the most clueless of gamers grasp the controls and basic gameplay quickly and easily — perfect for me.

The enemies include various mecha units that launch missiles or fire cannons, roving tanks, stationary gun emplacements, heavily armed human soldiers, laser-toting drone helicopters, and even enemy mini-tanks that will pursue you up and down walls and ceilings. Most of the enemy units are dumb — they tend to be placed in inconvenient locations and don't really pursue your vehicle beyond a certain area. I found that even the gigantic enemy bosses at the end of each level are undone by the mini-tank's ability to quickly boost in a tight circle while firing, which prevents even the biggest of baddies from getting a lock on you with whatever devastating weapon it happens to be packing.

Visually, the game is not the most impressive title I've seen running on the PlayStation. The producers had to sacrifice a certain level of detail to keep the frame rate speedy enough to impart the fast and frantic feeling of intense action. The majority of the texture maps that make up the backgrounds and environments become pixelated at close range. Some of the regular enemy characters seem fairly low-res; the basic human enemy that fires rockets at you is a poorly constructed Legoman with very limited animation.

While "Ghost" will be a must-have for the Japanese anime fans who own PlayStations, it also sports a dynamic game engine that will provide truckloads of fun for action enthusiasts. Plus, it's always nice to see a game on the PlayStation that doesn't involve Dragon Punches or gas pedals. Gamer budgets will undoubtedly be stretched thin this fall, but "Ghost In the Shell" is worth picking up. And, if you like the game, you will definitely want to run out and find the "Ghost In the Shell" video from Manga entertainment.

Thomas J.

THE BOTTOM LINE

PS EXTREME 86%

COMPATIBILITY

1 Player

Analog Joystick Compatible

While "Ghost" will be a must-have for the Japanese anime fans who own PlayStations, it also sports a dynamic game engine that will provide truckloads of fun for action enthusiasts. Plus, it's always nice to see a game on the PlayStation that doesn't involve Dragon Punches or gas pedals. Gamer budgets will undoubtedly be stretched thin this fall, but "Ghost In the Shell" is worth picking up. And, if you like the game, you will definitely want to run out and find the "Ghost In the Shell" video from Manga entertainment.

G-POLICE

PUBLISHED BY PSYGNOSIS — DEVELOPED BY WHEELHAUS

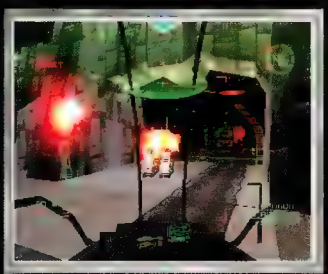
It's a little known fact that Liverpool-based Psygnosis, developers of such successful PlayStation titles as Destruction Derby (1 and 2), Wipeout, Wipeout XL, Formula 1, Assault Rigs and Tenka, had their hands in the development of the PlayStation hardware. No wonder then, from the get go, they've been able to produce games that not only show off the graphical prowess of the PlayStation, but consistently push the hardware past its known limits. Such is the case with their latest crop of titles coming out this fourth quarter. From the epic space battle, Colony Wars, to the manic, first-person shooter, Shadow Master, to the futuristic, WarHawk-like shooter and focus of this review, G-Police, it is evident these developers know their way around the PlayStation.

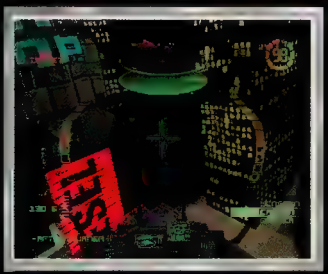
The background story in G-Police is rich and very detailed. It is obvious that it was developed in conjunction with the game — not as an afterthought — as it evolves as you progress through the game's 30-plus missions. There are actually two stories going on at once, and as you get closer and closer to beating the game, they become intertwined. G-Police takes place in a grim future where greedy corporations have overrun the government, as a result of the Earth's natural resources being completely depleted. A vicious race to mine and control what the stars could offer, escalated into an all-out war. When it was all over, a united group of corporations developed and set up huge mining colonies throughout the solar-system. The G-Police were then formed to keep the peace on these colonies, an act more difficult then would seem.You are a veteran of the war and have inadvertently decided to join the police to find out what really happened to your sister, who was also an officer in the force, and was said to have committed suicide during her tour of duty. You aren't buying it and the only way to uncover the truth is to join rank and go in deep undercover. Your assignment: to patrol the sprawling domes of Callisto city in a heavily-armed HAVOC gunship, which is very reminiscent of today's helicopters, except in place of propellers the HAVOC uses jet propulsion, allowing complete 360 degree control of your craft.

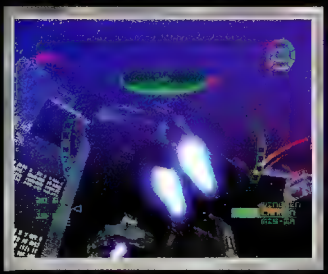
At first glance, G-Police might look like your typical 3D shooter. While it can be described as this, it goes much further by incorporating very deep gameplay that makes you use your brain as much as your trigger finger — there is a ton of strategy involved. Each of the various missions are broken down into primary and secondary objectives which must be met before you can proceed. In addition, from time to time, you will receive calls from G-Police HQ that give you additional sub-objectives such as clearing out hostile enemy craft that enter your vicinity and so forth. A typical mission can range from escorting a ground convoy of police cruisers, on their way to make an arrest, to snatching bombs off a runaway train and detonating them safely away from harm's way, to entering into intense aerial dogfights. Most missions give you access to a wingman who can be ordered to target specific enemies or allowed to ride shotgun and attack foes at will.

Your HAVOC is equipped with a variety of heavy weaponry that includes machine guns, lasers, rockets, plasma missiles, homing missiles, flares, megaton bombs and more. The play field is linked together by warp or access tunnels that warp you from one city dome to the next and the environments are totally believable, ranging from sprawling futuristic cities, teeming with skyscrapers and pedestrian traffic that actually obey traffic lights, to suburban fields and crops, being mined for their resources. Now that's what I call detail.

Controlling your HAVOC becomes second nature with just a little practice — a big accom-



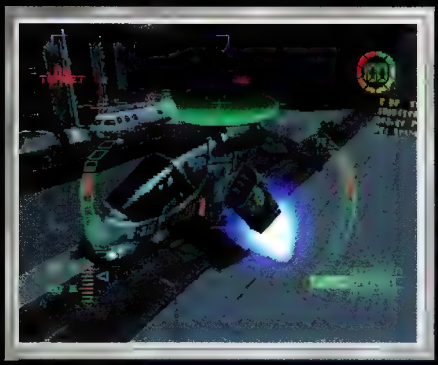




plishment for Psygnosis, especially since every button, on the PlayStation's controller, is used, sometimes twice. And if you just aren't getting the hang of it, Psygnosis thoughtfully included several training missions to let you get more familiar with the controls before heading into the heat of battle. This is a game where Sony's analog pad truly shines. The left thumb-pad is used to point your gunship up, down, left and right while the right is used as your "virtual" eyes, which lets you slightly control the camera so that you can look at what's in your immediate surroundings — this works especially well in the cockpit perspective.

G-Police' graphics are one of its stickiest points. Nowhere else will you see cities filled with huge skyscrapers, smokestacks billowing steam and fire, neon signs that rotate and change images on the fly, town squares complete with statues, highways, bridges ... you name it. There are incredibly realistic explosions, tight texturemaps and beautiful lighting effects. In return for all of the incredible detail, the draw-in, distance and frame rate have had to be compromised. I anticipate pro-PlayStation (optimistic) fans will get over the draw-in while PlayStation pessimists will be quick to complain about it. For me, once I became immersed, I ceased to notice it. The frame rate, on the other hand, is a bit of a drag, making it hard to aim at enemy ships when there are too many objects on screen at once. In addition to the beautiful landscapes, Psygnosis has incorporated tons on rendered CG cut-screens — going so far as to motion capture the various characters' movements to give them a more "human" look and feel — it works!

The only other downfall of the game is that it is extremely difficult on some levels and ridiculously easy on others. Most games start out easy enough and then they slowly ramp up the difficulty as you progress. Not in G-Police. Around mission eight you will be pulling your hair out in complete frustration (it took me literally 20-25 tries to beat this level) then I breezed through the next five or six until it happened again. The difficulty might turn some players off and that's a shame, because the game is worth the extreme effort.



G-Police has a lot of meat to it. You won't be able to beat this game in one or two sittings, guaranteed. There is a ton of game playing to be had — two CDs worth, in fact — and gamers will definitely get their bang for their buck. If you can get past its few shortcomings, then G-Police comes highly recommended. Psygnosis continues to excel at what they do best.

Greg

PS EXTREME — THE BOTTOM LINE

93%

COMPATIBILITY

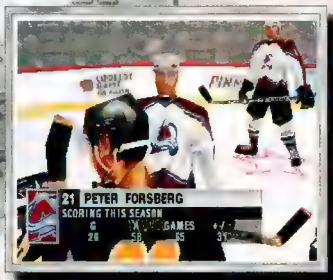
1 Player

Analog Joystick Compatible

G-Police has a lot of meat to it. You won't be able to beat this game in one or two sittings, guaranteed. There is a ton of game playing to be had — two CDs worth, in fact — and gamers will definitely get their bang for their buck. If you can get past its few shortcomings, then G-Police comes highly recommended. Psygnosis continues to excel at what they do best.

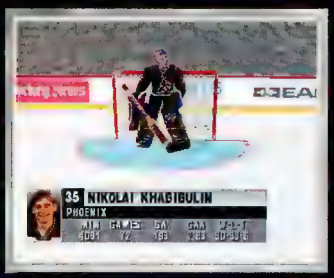
NHL 98

PUBLISHED BY EA SPORTS — DEVELOPED BY EA CANADA



EA Sports went back to school when they created NHL 98; this time around they had their guys in Canada put together a completely new engine, as they scrapped last year's version, in the hopes of bringing back some of the 16-bit magic.

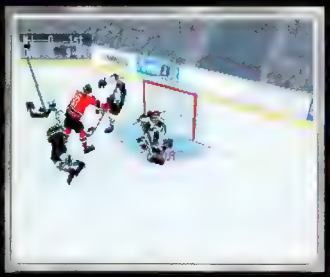
Some of the things that are gone from '97 are the in-studio, pregame, drone-fest with James Brown (thank God, no more of that hand clasping, unclasping routine!) and the "insightful" on ice verbiage of John Davidson. Instead, NHL 98 features Jim Hughson and Daryl Reaugh doing the play-by-play and color. The commentary team manages to do a decent job, even though the action is REALLY fast paced and tough to keep up with. My advice is to go into the options menu and turn down the speech three or four notches, otherwise it can become overwhelming ("KOZLOV has the PUCK, he's hit HARD, Jagr takes it, he PASSES to FRANCIS, over to JOHNSON, he SHOOTS, NO GOOD, what a SAVE by Hrudey" — BLAH, Blah Blah, Blah, Blah Blah Blah — geez, pass the Excedrin, my head's pounding!). EA has moved away from the TV style presentation in lieu of a quick interface that allows you to get into a game right away. The players are all polygonal (like 97) but, this year, there is no break-up of the polys if you get too close. The names and numbers are easier to see, and one of the best new features is that, when you create a player, the name will be on the back of the jersey as well! NHL 97 supposedly had fighting in it, but I never saw it. So far, in

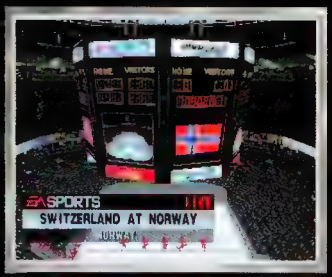


98, I'm averaging a little more than one fight per game. Not bad, but the fighting is pretty tame — you got your jabs, hooks, and haymakers — no one will confuse the fight sequences with Tekken 2, that's for sure.

Graphically, the new engine provides some nice looking rinks, with transparencies that look great, showcasing all the ads and logos underneath the ice. As mentioned above, the polygonal characters all look terrific, with well rounded helmets (see Breakaway 98 review), detailed jerseys with crisp logos and bright colors, and very little blockiness in the bodies. EA also does a nice job presenting statistical updates throughout the game. A quick word on the sound effects and music — yahoo! Some quality stuff in here, Maynard. Kudos to EA Canada and the sound team (gotta love Beethoven's 9th).

The animation in NHL 98 is the strong point of the title, no question about it. The players can be seen grabbing another guys uniform, tripping him with his stick, crumpling to the floor in a heap after a vicious hit, and flying through the air after being tripped up. There's guys hunched over, resting on their knees when tired, guys pounding the glass inside the penalty box, and a ton of different goalie animations for all the saves. The best part of all this detail is that you can actually SEE them occur — they don't get washed away with the rest of the on screen graphics or lost in poor camera angles. Speaking of which, there are eight different camera angles to choose





to 1. Guys are getting clobbered all over the place, yet the whistle is never blown — in this case, less whacking would be a good thing. When changing to the defensive player closest to the puck, you don't get instant control of the player, and therefore tend to miss out on the reason you switched players in the first place. And lastly, there isn't a whole lot of scoring. Until you get the hang of it (tip #2 — use one timers and deflections, forget one-on-one scoring), you'll see lots of 2-1 and 1-0 games (even with 10 minute periods). Kind of an odd mix — lots of arcade smashing action with "simulation" like scoring. However, one last positive note is that of the "special move" button (triangle). Using this will get you out of some trouble spots and allow for some eye-popping shots on goal.

While certainly a nice improvement over NHL 97, the 98 version just doesn't have all the right pieces in place. NHL 98 has got an incredible engine and, with tighter contols, could have been the greatest hockey game ever. Instead, due to the aforementioned control issues, NHL 98 is only the third best-playing game of hockey, which is too bad considering it is such a good looking game.

from and, let me tell you straight up, the Chase cam is the ONE to use. Once you get the hang of it, playing the game from this perspective really puts you into the action, although the "ice" cam is a close second best.

OK, we've come to that part of the review were we either keep heaping praise on the game or we start to expose the cracks in the armor. Unfortunately, NHL 98 has some control issues that really hinder the game and keep it from being the best hockey game ever. Specifically, passing in NHL 98 isn't on par with the rest of the field. The guys in Canada used the L1/R1 buttons to call defensive/offensive plays, the L2 button to change lines, and the R2 button to change camera angles (all on the fly). One of those buttons would have been MUCH better suited for use with the Direct Passing system. Using the d-pad and ⊗ button is very haphazard in NHL 98, as your passes don't always go to the guy you want. Another sore spot for me is that it's too easy to lose control of the puck, as all another player has to do is breath on you and the puck is stolen — guys are always being held, pushed, tripped, smacked, whatever. Which brings us to the lack of penalties; even with penalties at the highest setting, the ratio of whacks to penalties is like 100

Eric

PS EXTREME — THE BOTTOM LINE

85%

COMPATIBILITY

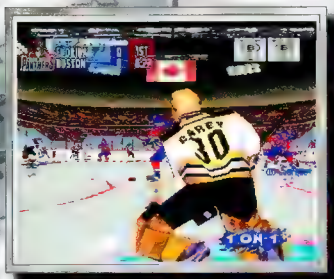
1 or 2 Players

Multi Tap Adaptable 1-8 Players

While certainly a nice improvement over NHL 97, the 98 version just doesn't have all the right pieces in place. NHL 98 has got an incredible engine, and with tighter contols, could have been the greatest hockey game ever. Instead, due to the aforementioned control issues, NHL 98 is only the third best-playing game of hockey, which is too bad considering it is such a good looking game.

NHL BREAKAWAY 98

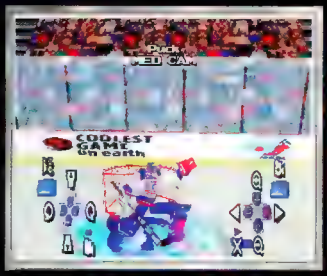
PUBLISHED BY ACCLAIM — DEVELOPED BY SCULPTURED SOFTWARE

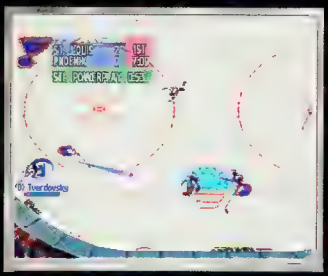


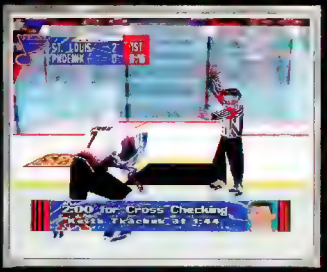
Acclaim has jumped into the hotly contested hockey wars head first, as their NHL Breakaway 98 has become an instant contender for the throne. For those of you with an attention span as long as my short term memory capabilities (read: tiny), you may skip the next 900 words and go straight to the bottom line: 91%. Yup — this here's a Gold game that features some great stuff, lots of good stuff, and only a little stuff to improve on. As of this writing, I've already played, and reviewed, NHL 98 and NHL Powerplay 98 (in the September issue), but the final version of NHL Face-Off 98 hasn't come in yet, so the comparisons made in this article will reflect the prior games, and then you will find all the games pitted against each other in the Face-Off review (found elsewhere in this issue). Well, I'm all ready to go — so let 's get it on (insert Tim Allen grunt here)!

The developer, Sculptured Software (NBA Jam Extreme), has done a great job with the polygonal characters, although they are a shade less impressive than their NHL 98 counterparts. This is due mainly to the shape of the helmets — they don't appear as round as they should. However, the team logos, names and numbers all look crisper than those found on either NHL 98 or Powerplay 98. And, best of all, while EA and Virgin were also able to put names on the back of the jerseys (of created players), Sculptured has done the best job of spacing the letters to make them clear and easy to read. Graphically, Breakaway 98 is not the most impressive of the bunch, but there's nothing so dreadful that will turn your stomach, either. The ice is a shade of yellow (white in NHL98, blue in PP98), and the crowds (like NHL98) are rather bland, when compared to the colorful people in PP98. Breakaway 98 features constant stats updates much like NHL, but the announcer takes it one step further. For instance, score a couple of goals, and both announcers will tell you the who, what, why and how, but then the dude in Breakaway also says "His 10th of the season" — kind of cool in a subtle way. There's no play-by-play in Breakaway (or PP98), but it's not something that you NOTICE is missing, as opposed to you NOTICING that it's slightly annoying in the EA game (that's why there are sound levels).

Much like the animation is the best part of NHL 98, it's also the hallmark of Breakaway 98. There are plenty of different goalie saves, dives, trips, checks, and holds. The major difference in this category, though, is that in Breakaway you get a feel for the animation taking place. It's not WHAM WHAM WHAM like in NHL98, but more fluid holds and checks, the kind that may slow your progress a bit, but don't knock you down or take the puck away every time it happens. Also, I like the way the players jump back a bit, or try and hop over a stick or helmet that may have fallen to the floor. There is fighting in all three titles, but none is done particularly better or worse than the others. The camera angles are many, as Acclaim made sure no less than six of them are in there, but like most sports games, only a couple are really playable (or, what you would WANT to use). In this case, your best bet is the medium cam level, which puts you close to the action, so you can enjoy the wonderful polys, but still let's you see enough of the action. The sound







f/x are worthy, but the rink music is lacking. There's not enough of it, and what's there can't hold a candle to the tunes in NHL 98.

If you were to add up the score right now, NHL 98 would be first, Breakaway 2nd, and PP98 third. Well, before we jump over to see if Face-Off 98 can take on NHL 98 for supremacy, we need to talk about gameplay. Oops, almost forgot about that one, eh? Not quite, Nikolai. You and I both know it's all about the gameplay, and Acclaim hit the nail right on the head with Breakaway 98. The game is just a blast to play, in most part, due to the inclusion of (and I quote) "Acclaim Sports Precision Passing System." Whew. Yes, it's Sony's trademarked Icon Passing in another phrase, but it accomplishes the same thing — great passing. EA needed it, Virgin could have used it, but Acclaim has it, and they've made great use of the technology. Of course, Sculptured managed to do a decent job with the standard passing mechanism, but I highly recommend using ASPPS (ok, Icon Passing) — it just works so darn effortlessly and makes one timers a joy to behold! Lastly, Acclaim threw in a nifty little point system that allows you to earn points after each win (more for winning streaks, point spread, etc.) and then use the points to hire coaches that will increase your players status in different areas (shooting, goal tending, checking, etc.). It's a cool little feature that adds another element to the experience. A final tip: If you're an experienced video hockey player, you'll want to use these settings: gameplay — slowest (trust me, this game is way FAST!), difficulty — hard, goalie — hard. You'll get the most out of your NHL Breakaway 98 experience with these settings.

Of the minor changes I would make to NHL Breakaway 98, I would work on a smoother and cleaner IR system; make the player markers transparent (the colors are too loud), and then add the extra rink music. I'd also like to see the icons in ASSPS a tad smaller. Other than that, the game's pretty darn good the way it is.

NHL Breakaway 98 is certainly the surprise sports game of the year, and thanks to its wonderful playability and the huge stats data base (top 100 in lots of categories), Acclaim and Sculptured are to be rewarded with our Editor's Seal of Approval — the Gold award.

Eric

THE BOTTOM LINE

PS EXTREME

91%

COMPATIBILITY

1 or 2 Players

Multi Tap Adaptable 1-8 Players

NHL Breakaway 98 is certainly the surprise sports game of the year, and thanks to its wonderful playability and the huge stats data base (top 100 in lots of categories), Acclaim and Sculptured are to be rewarded with our Editor's Seal of Approval — the Gold award.

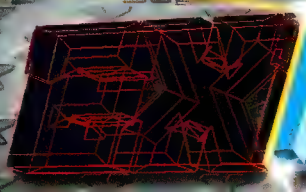
NHL FACE-OFF 98

PUBLISHED BY SONY — DEVELOPED BY KILLER GAMES

Ok, you can lock me up and throw away the key, now — I've finished playing all the hockey games out there, yet I feel like Homer did when he went to Hell and they kept stuffing donuts into him, but he just kept saying "more, more" (just can't get enough of those Simpsons references, eh?). I'm hopelessly addicted to hockey games,which is saying something, as there were no hockey leagues for me to participate in as a youngster (ya know, "sunny California" and all that...). But, since the beginning of 16-bit, hockey has been my favorite sports game to play on consoles, and that feeling was rejuvenated, last year, with the release of NHL Face-Off '97 from Sony. Here it is a year later, as well as three hockey game reviews later, and I'm playing a boat-load of Face-Off 98. The new polygonal characters have taken the game to its evolutionary plateau, and the difficulty settings (tweaked AI) have turned the computer opponent into a worthy adversary.

Like the "other" three hockey titles, Face-Off 98 has gone polygonal, and the characters look every bit as good as those in Breakaway or NHL. The biggest difference being that, in Face-Off, the animation is noticeably smoother. While everything moved well enough, in NHL and Breakaway, Sony has been able to smooth out the animation even more by using a technique called "interpolation", which basically eliminates any choppiness when going from one frame of animation to the next. You will really notice this when getting tripped up and watching your guy go head over heals in full somersault fashion! And just wait until you smash someone into the plexiglass and watch how it all ripples from the collision — very impressive! Graphically, Face-Off 98 is the best looking of the bunch, as the ice looks the most realistic (kind of white-gray), the uniform colors are bright and the logos are clear. Yes, there are names on the back of the jerseys for created players, although I think Breakaway still does that the best. The stadium announcer is back and he's just as colorful as he was last year — even more so! The rink music is good, but NHL 98 still ranks as the best in that department, although Sony nailed the different arena sound effects. Example — if you're playing in Phoenix and the Coyotes score a goal, you get the "coyote howl" instead of the traditional horn blowing noise. Pretty cool.

If you recall, last years Face-Off received our highest award, Platinum, with a score of 98%. Of all the games that come and go, very few of them get much attention during our "free" time. Well, with Face-Off '97, I just about completed my full 82 game season, which really pays tribute to what a fantastic game it is. The game may have been a tad easy though, and Sony opted to make '98 a challenging contest, to say the least. On Rookie level, most competent hockey players out



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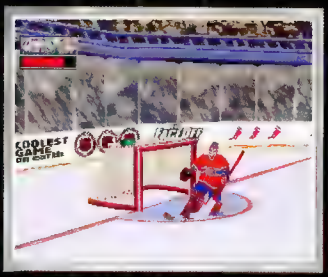
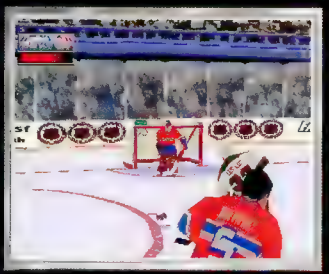
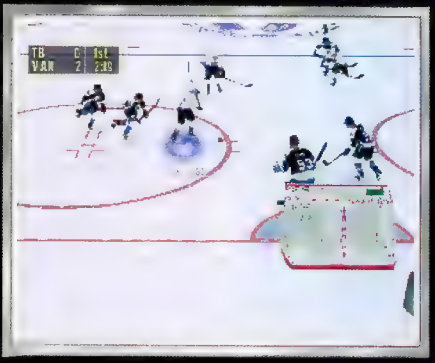






there should have no trouble turning wristers, slap shots, and one timers into a double digit victory. Put the difficulty setting on Veteran, and then you will meet your match — that is until you figure out that those pin-point accurate slap shots, you used in Rookie level, are now missing the net by five feet, and it's time to try another strategy. Now it's time to really concentrate on the wristers and one timers for your scoring success (I'm kind of partial to the wristers). My main complaint in the difficulty department is that you find yourself ending up with one sided victories in Rookie level, but then either winning (or losing) games on Veteran with scores like 8-7 and 7-6. I don't know, but Patrick Roy doesn't give up seven goals a game — especially not to the Sharks! The worst part is watching the computer whiz a slap shot past your glove for a "cheap" goal, while you have to earn everything you get. For some reason, I found playing on the All-Star level pretty much the same as Veteran level. Take heed, though, if you're not proficient with Icon Passing, then don't pass Rookie level without going to the practice mode. Here, you can determine the number of computer opponents on the ice (1-6), so you can fool around with varying offenses. It's a great place to work on your Triangle offense and one-timers!

Lastly, one of the things that grabbed my attention, with Face-Off 98, was that of the five camera angles, ALL of them worked reasonably well, although none of them brings you as close to the action as the "Chase" cam from EA or the "Lo" cam from Acclaim.

While I found the difficulty levels to be a little unbalanced, NHL Face-Off 98 will retain its hold as the premiere hockey title, and is your best bet in '98. The combination of stellar graphics and incredibly smooth animation add up to make it THE hockey game.

Eric

PS EXTREME — THE BOTTOM LINE

95%

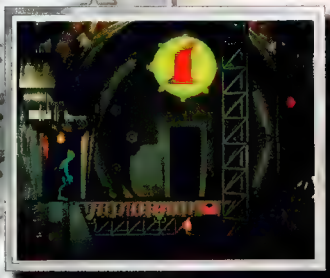
COMPATIBILITY

- 1or2 Players
- Multi Tap Adaptable 1-8 Players
- Analog Joystick Compatible

While I found the difficulty levels to be a little unbalanced, NHL Face-Off 98 will retain its hold as the premiere hockey title, and is your best bet in '98. The combination of stellar graphics and incredibly smooth animation add up to make it THE hockey game.

ABE'S ODDYSEE

PUBLISHED BY GT INTERACTIVE — DEVELOPED BY ODDWORLD INHABITANTS



Oddworld: Abe's Oddysee casts you in the role of Abe, a hard working little Mudokon who has spent his life toiling away for the alien equivalent of Hickory Farms. While working late one night, Abe comes across a secret meeting held by his bosses, discussing a "New and Tasty" snack that they're working on. The secret ingredient of the aforementioned new and tasty snack delight? None other than Abe's race of hapless Mudokons. Faster than you can suck down a heaping bag of Soylent Green, Abe decides to boogie and take his friends with him. Now it's up to you to help Abe save his people from becoming the next batch of pork rinds.

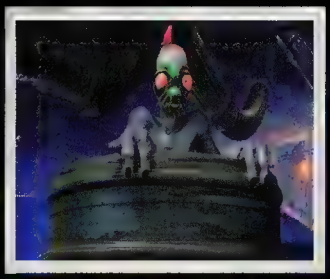
Playing Oddworld is like taking a time-capsule back to the early Nineties, when French development house Delphine released "Flashback" and "Out of This World," which featured remarkably well animated characters who ran, jumped, climbed and blasted through a long string of levels. Oddworld is engaging for its unique character design, but it ultimately plays exactly like the Delphine titles. Oddworld's make for a fun blend of brain teasers and thumb twitching at first, but the gameplay and puzzles are so completely derivative of the Delphine titles that were new and different over six years ago that it ends up falling flat. From the setup of the platforms and puzzles to the way Abe moves, everything was so familiar that I thought I was having a flashback. Oddworld even saves at the same odd intervals as the Delphine games, forcing you

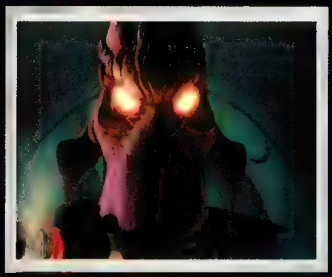
to go through the same series of puzzles over and over again until you have reached the next undetectable save point.

One of the worst parts of playing "Flashback" held true in Oddworld as well. There's no smooth scrolling from one screen to the next - when you run off to the right or left, instead of screen moving along, there's a sudden break as the PlayStation loads the next screen. This resulted in my killing poor Abe a number of times that would have been avoided if the screen moved instead of jumped. Running off-screen and straight into an electrical death field or yawning chasm made me toss my controller at the floor on a few occasions. This was forgivable when playing on a Super Nintendo cartridge, but inexcusable for a 32-bit CD-ROM.

There are a number of cut-scenes that run throughout the game, usually coming in after finishing a level; this is where the Oddworld really comes to life. The quality of the computer graphic scenes is amazing, and puts most other rendered game cinemas to shame. The video is clean and crisp, running at full screen without the visible screen noise you usually get in PSX FMV.

GT Interactive has made a big deal of Abe's ability to "talk" to the creatures in the game. As a concept, it is fairly cool, but the execution leaves something to be desired. Abe's speech is used very rarely, and often for nothing more complex than a basic Simple Simon/Parrappa type of test. There's not quite as much interaction as one would imagine considering the extent of unusual





creatures that inhabit the Oddworld. Pushing controller buttons lets you make Abe say "Hello," "Follow me," or "Wait." Further button presses will make him laugh, growl, whistle or fart. It's these last noises that are utilized the most throughout the game, as various creatures make you repeat whistled phrases in order to pass beyond them.

To me, Abe's chanting ability is more inventive than the communication system. By holding down the L1 and R1 buttons, Abe will release a mystical aura that's capable of all kinds of mischief, including Abe's ability to possess certain enemy guards. You can actually switch into the body of the gun-toting baddie, and use it as a hapless agent of destruction, leaving your unarmed little Mudokon bod behind while you run about and shoot the begeezus out of the countryside. Once you're finished with the guard, you can execute him in a number of delightfully evil ways: run him off a high cliff, jog through an electrical barrier, pitch face first into a mine field, and my personal favorite, making it explode in a satisfying shower of goo by holding L1 and R1. Totally gratuitous, completely uncalled for, visually disgusting and highly appreciated.

You're clued in right from the get-go that this is only the first in a string of Oddworld games. The back story, richly detailed environments and interesting creature design almost demand some sort of sequel. Let's hope that for the next outing that the developers spend as much time on their game concept as they did on their character creation. Maybe it is time to move beyond 2D gaming. Abe's Oddysee would have been much better had it been completely fresh, instead of trying to rely on a tired engine. Graphically a great looking game with some interesting visual concepts, and fun for fans of brain teaser games, but Abe's Oddysee just doesn't hold up in the long run...

Thomas J.

THE BOTTOM LINE

PS EXTREME 80%

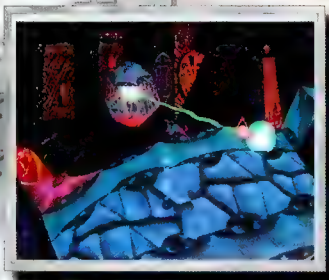
COMPATIBILITY

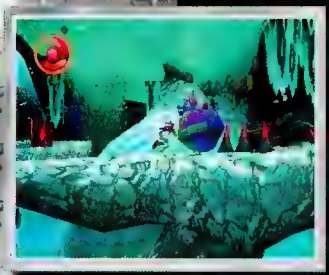
1 Player

Maybe it is time to move beyond 2D gaming. Abe's Oddysee would have been much better had it been completely fresh, instead of trying to rely on a tired engine. Graphically a great looking game with some interesting visual concepts, and fun for fans of brain teaser games, but Abe's Oddysee just doesn't hold up in the long run...

PANDEMONIUM 2

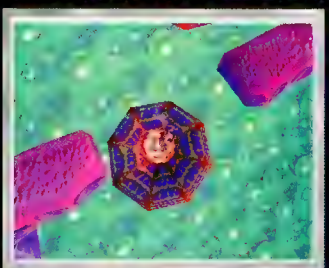
PUBLISHED BY MIDWAY — DEVELOPED BY CRYSTAL DYNAMICS

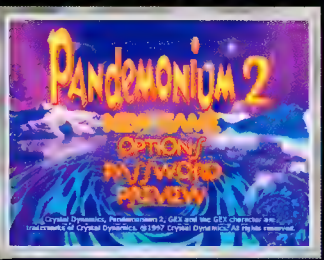




Every so often, the big Editor-in-Cheese let's me get out of the sports cage and roam free with the other RPG, action/platform and action/adventure guys — such a liberating feeling, let me tell ya! Actually, I was a big fan of the original Pandemonium!, and when I saw #2 at E3 this past June, I started jockeying to get my hands on this one. Besides, Zach's a busy guy, what with all that cleaning up after his bladder-control-less puppy, and Dave, the other big A/P guy, he's got that Nicklaus 3-wood permanently glued in his hands, so I guess I win by default. No matter, I'm a happy camper and "Fargus fanatic" — just wait until you see what this jokin' jester can do!

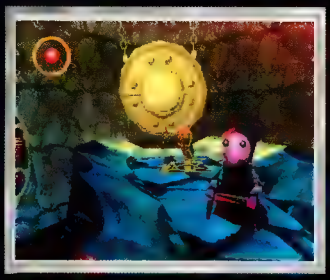
For those of you that may have missed the first Pandemonium!, the gameplay is decidedly classic. In the true sense of Sonic, your characters (Fargus or Nikki) move in a linear fashion — that is they go left or right only. The goal is simple enough — finish the current level in order to get to the next. Also in true action/platform guise, is the ability to go to bonus levels and find secret areas (some more secret than others!). Last year's Fargus used Sid (his talking head, puppet-on-a-stick sidekick) as a weapon to wipe out the bad guys. Well, Sid is still as useful as ever, but now he has the ability to do a wonderful impersonation of our long lost friend, Dig Dug. Yup, in true Dig Dug fashion, Fargus can use Sid (when properly powered up) to pump up the enemies until they explode into many fragmented pieces — COOL! Nikki doesn't come equipped with any weaponry, although she can attain some cool spells through gaining her own power ups. Since each character has their own initial moves and subsequent power ups, you will undoubtedly have to choose between the characters for certain levels — Nikki's double jump comes in handy many times! When playing the original Pandemonium, how many times did you mutter (what did you call me?) "I wish I could grab onto that ledge!"?. Well, if so, then there's good news for you, 'cause now both characters can jump up and hang onto ledges, and just about anything else that can be grabbed! There's also ropes to be climbed, trellis' to do the "monkey-bar" thing, and even some cool rubber bands that shoot you five stories high.

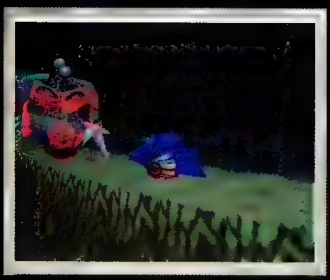


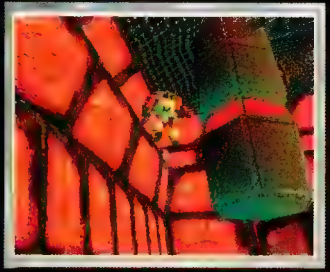


What really made the original game so amazing, to me, was the vastness of the levels. Well, the new levels are every bit as big, if not bigger. The colors are just as psychedelic, and the theme of each level is even more bizarre. How about "Huevos Liberated", "Fantabulous", "The Zoul Train" and, my personal favorite, "Lick the Toad." Yes, even after a case of Jolt and 24 hrs of Hee Haw re-runs, I don't think my gray tissue could ever come up with such prose. But hey, if you think the

EX RATED

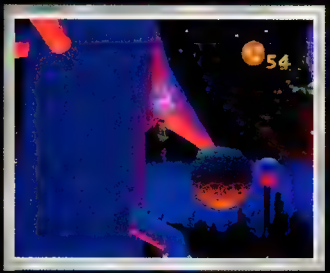




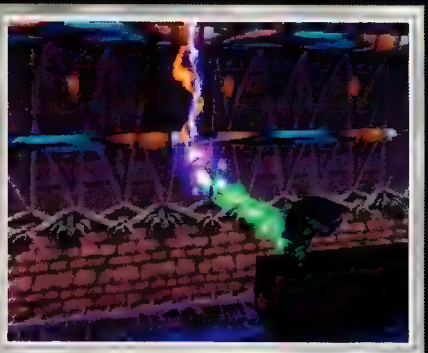


names are weird, just check out the eyeballs, tongues, giant hands, neon colored (isn't everything?) dragons, and tons of strange humor ("God save the Queen" stamped on the side of a tank?).

There are many more puzzles in Pandemonium 2 than there were in the first version, and some are truly ingenious. The switches, levers, and elevating platforms in level 13 (Fantabulous) create a nifty series of events, that also throws in a time element at the end — get out before she blows!



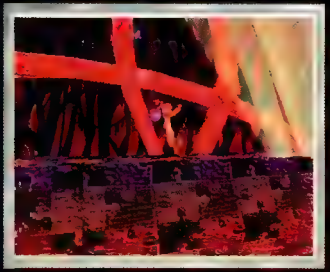
One of the areas that makes Pandemonium 2 standout is its ability to change faces, every so often. You can drive a tank, and slowly blast the crud out of everything, you can get anti-gravity boots that have you floating around, and also cruise on the back end of this tank like thing, where you've got to ricochet metal balls back to the mech that's shooting them at you! And of course, let's not forget the ability to motor around in one of the mechs, while flying through a seriously trippy "collide-a-scope." It seems as if almost every level in Pandemonium 2 offers something never seen before, or something done with a new twist. And when you consider this is a straight forward action/platform title — that's saying something! On the negative side, Pandemonium's characters look good enough, but seem as if they could stand to have a few more polys thrown in. Also, the



lack of a memory card save option (still uses password save) is odd — what's up wit dat?

Pandemonium 2 is a worthy sequel, and one that shouldn't be missed by any fan of classic action/platform games. The additional elements, secrets, and stunning visuals make this a game to play for hours on end.

Eric



THE BOTTOM LINE

PS EXTREME

90%

COMPATIBILITY

1 Player

It seems as if almost every level in Pandemonium 2 offers something never seen before, or something done with a new twist. And when you consider this is a straight forward action/platform title — that's saying something!... Pandemonium 2 is a worthy sequel, and one that shouldn't be missed by any fan of classic action/platform games. The additional elements, secrets, and stunning visuals make this a game to play for hours on end.

MAXIMUM FORCE

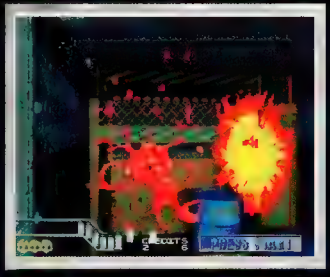
PUBLISHED BY MIDWAY — DEVELOPED BY ATARI GAMES

I must admit, after recently spending an awful lot of time with the latest light gun shooter to hit the PlayStation, Namco's "Time Crisis", I wasn't really looking forward to diving into another one, anytime soon. Well, imagine my lack of enthusiasm when I was given yet another light gun game to review, immediately following the last one. Oh well, someone's got to do it! The game in question is the sequel to Midway's smash arcade hit, "Area 51". Maximum Force has also done well in the arcades, but faces much stiffer competition in the home console market, specifically from Time Crisis. That being said, it's time I dust off my Nubi Virtual Gun, (the best all around light gun for the PlayStation) and get started.

As I mentioned earlier, Maximum Force is the sequel to Area 51 and at first glance appears to be very similar indeed. If you played A-51, you will no doubt recall the classic light gun gameplay elements such as seemingly endless secret areas and very numerous, albeit short, levels. Maximum Force relies heavily on the same formula, with a few significant changes. First of all, you are no longer blasting away at secretly held alien invaders. This time around you are doing battle with some pretty ferocious terrorists in a bunch of cool set-

tings that have multiple sections. And, of course, there are plenty of secret areas as well (36 to be exact). What hasn't changed is the sense of humor the developers have interjected throughout the game. The plethora of scantily clad women, wandering helplessly throughout the beach is always a crowd pleaser; especially the scene where the woman's skirt lifts up because of a speeding bullet that passed by a little too close.

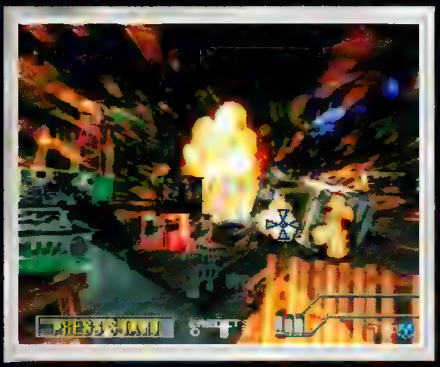
The game is broken down into three very large levels; a welcome change to the traditionally short light gun games. The third level can only be accessed by beating the first two, and has some of the best gameplay to be found in this type of game. The first level/mission has you battling it out in a variety of water based activities from the deck of a merchant ship to sandy beaches (ah... the beautiful scenery) to underwater mines and depth charges. The second mission is city based and is very reminiscent of the original Virtua Cop from Sega. The last mission is set in the jungle and will put your shooting skills to the ultimate test. Graphically, the game is very similar to its predecessor. The backgrounds are very detailed and pre-rendered, while the characters are all digitized sprites. No earth shattering technology here, just tried-and-true elements that, when coupled with a little imagina-



tion, make for a very enjoyable gaming experience.

As with most categories of video games, the gameplay ultimately decides the overall playability of the title. With light gun games, however, it's not that cut and dry. There are many other factors that contribute to its success. First, and foremost, is the accuracy of the shooting mechanism and the satisfaction gained by hitting the target. Here, Maximum Force gets mixed reviews. The shooting mechanism is accurate enough and will keep you challenged throughout the life span of the game. The kill satisfaction, however, is very weak. There is so much happening on the screen at once, that it's very hard to focus in on just one character. What happens is, you find yourself just blasting the hell out of everything on the screen. Sometimes you hit something, sometimes you don't. Consequently, you don't get the satisfaction (just can't get no...) you need to keep on playing. Compare that to Time Crisis, where the sound and impact of each bullet fired is art in its purest form. Don't despair, however, because what maximum force lacks in impact satisfaction, it more than makes up for in replayability.

There are very few, if any, light gun games that have the ability to bring you back once you've completed the majority of the game; Maximum Force is different. With the multitude of secret areas and abundance of different activities happening on the screen, you will want to play it through many times, to make sure you didn't miss anything. The secret areas are all very creative and promote an atmosphere of addiction ("gotta find the other ones... gotta find the other ones"). This one aspect, alone, had me coming back for more,



on many occasions.

If it sounds like I enjoyed Maximum Force more than I thought I would, you're right. I think Midway and Atari have taken the 2D light gun shooter about as far as it can go with Max Force. Large levels, a first for an arcade conversion, plenty of replayability, addictive gameplay and Midway/Atari's classic sense of humor, all have made for a very enjoyable experience.

Alex

PS EXTREME — THE BOTTOM LINE

86%

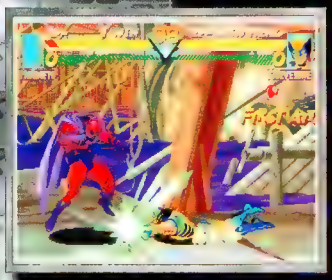
COMPATIBILITY

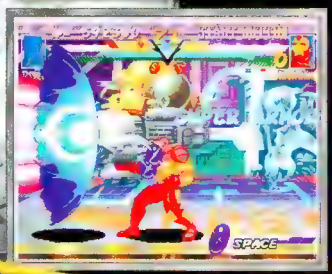
1 Player

I think Midway and Atari have taken the 2D light gun shooter about as far as it can go with Max Force. Large levels, a first for an arcade conversion, plenty of replayability, addictive gameplay and Midway/Atari's classic sense of humor, all have made for a very enjoyable experience.

MARVEL SUPER HEROES

PUBLISHED AND DEVELOPED BY CAPCOM

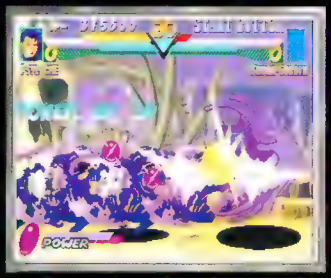


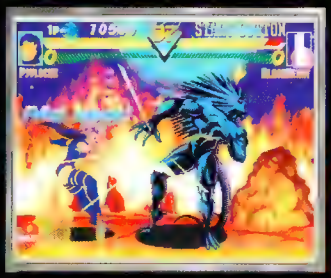


The names are as familiar as those of your closest friends and family: The Amazing Spider Man. The Incredible Hulk. Captain America. Wolverine. Iron Man. Dr. Doom. Magneto. They have fueled the over-active imaginations of America's kids for over three decades. Add to this list Juggernaut, Psylocke, Blackheart, Shuma Gorath and Thanos and you have a roll call of some of the greatest (or strangest, in Shuma Gorath's case) super heroes and villains to grace the pages of Marvel Comics, all included in one neat package — Marvel Super Heroes from Capcom.

There's something to be said for a game that let's you play as a nine-foot tall, gamma-irradiated, green-skinned, surly-tempered giant. Being able to rip a huge chunk out of the ground and hurl it like a cannon ball, or leap into space to grab a meteor to smash on your opponents dome is just icing on the cake. Screw Kung Fu. Instead of form and grace, I'm gonna Juggernaut Punch you straight in the mellon, sending you flying 30 feet backwards to bounce on yer keister. Now that's a fighting game! Each character, from your friendly neighborhood Spider Man to Captain America, staunch defender of truth and justice, has the look and feel of their comic book incarnation, and are well integrated into the video game arena. The quest for a great comic book game extends back as far as video games go, since comic books and video games are two aspects of youth culture that should go hand in hand. And yet, developers have almost always fumbled when it came to balancing superhuman powers and abilities against pure game mechanics (which explains why there can never be a good Superman game). The Marvel Super Heroes arcade game followed in the footsteps of Capcom's earlier beat-'em-up winner, X-Men: Children of the Atom, and tossed in some of Marvel's flagship characters to round out an already exciting game.

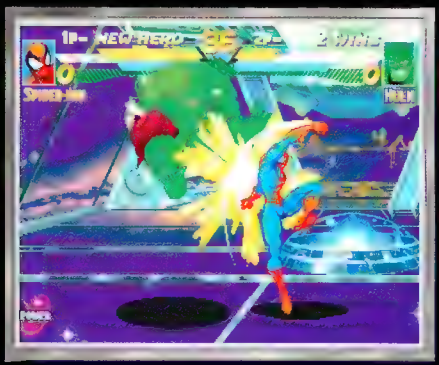
Marvel is by no means a "realistic" fighting game. If you're looking for precision controls and tight combos, head elsewhere. A few years back Capcom realized that their fighting games were alienating newer players. The combo systems on games like Street Fighter Alpha could get so tricky and complicated, at times, that they were actually turning people off. X-Men was released to combat this, followed by Marvel Super Heroes, X-Men vs. Street Fighter and the newly arrived Marvel vs. Street Fighter. This series of games was developed with the beginner in mind. Marvel works best in a two-player situation, as almost all games do. Finally, here's a game that even your mentally challenged roommate can play, so he'll stop griping about all the times you've completely humiliated him with your superior knowledge of fighting games. Toss your buddy a controller, show him where to put his fingers, and even the most clueless dork will blast out a few special moves in short order. There is a deeper system to master in the game, don't get me wrong — I've seen kids in the arcade dish out some crazy 99 hit air combos. You do have something to work for, if you're interested in getting deeper inside the play mechanics than just making your





hero shoot big fireballs or leap three stories into the air.

Now, a few things to keep in mind about Marvel, a caution if you will. Arcade aficionados have been jonesing for this game for well over a year now, craving the explosive speed and frantic action that made up the Marvel coin-op experience. Alas, speed is not king in this outing. Since I don't pretend to be a programmer or developer, I can only hazard a guess as to why Marvel Supes gets so bogged down. For one thing, Capcom has done an admirable job (as usual) with this arcade port, and they have managed to squeeze a whole lot of character information into the PlayStation's paltry 2MB of video RAM. This is no sucky Darkstalkers conversion, with animation randomly dropped out all over the place, this is a clean transition from arcade to home.



Sure, this is not an "arcade perfect" conversion. The reality is those big 600-pound suckers cost $2500 each, while you only dole out a measly fifty bucks for a PSX disc. Each fighter is heavily animated, and that's gonna cost you some of your system speed. In fact, you'll notice a slight increase of speed in the game when you play character versus same character — half the animations to store in memory means more system resources to bop around. But, for the most part, Marvel is going to be a lot less speedy than we would have liked. Even on the fastest Turbo setting, the game moves at an average pace. The load time is pretty crummy as well — I've decided to have the words "Now Loading" carved on my tomb stone. But these are the only negative aspects of an otherwise enjoyable game.

Parents, don't worry. Junior's not going to be severing any heads or removing any spleens; this game is pure clean fun! Kids, re-enact your favorite comic book showdowns! 20-somethings, bust out those old Spider Man Underoos and whoop it up in style. As you can see, there are many layers of appeal to Marvel. Lotsa tough decisions to make right now, with Capcom weighing in with three killer fighters all demanding your hard-earned pennies. Marvel Super Heroes is perfect for those looking for an easy-to-learn fighting game, with a definite pull from the heavy-duty licensed characters that should be attractive for any PlayStation owner. I'm still of the mind that Street Fighter EX is a better fighter over all, but let's face it: if you're in your mid-to-late twenties, like me, and own a PlayStation, being able to play as Spider Man or Iron Man is a real treat for your inner child. Pick up a copy of Marvel, and relive the Golden Age of comics. Excelsior!

Thomas J.

PS EXTREME — THE BOTTOM LINE

86%

COMPATIBILITY

1or2 Players

Marvel Super Heroes is perfect for those looking for an easy-to-learn fighting game, with a definite pull from the heavy-duty licensed characters that should be attractive for any PlayStation owner. I'm still of the mind that Street Fighter EX is a better fighter over all, but let's face it: if you're in your mid-to-late twenties, like me, and own a PlayStation, being able to play as Spider Man or Iron Man is a real treat for your inner child. Pick up a copy of Marvel, and relive the Golden Age of comics. Excelsior!

The PS *Extreme* Historical Ranking Chart

EXCAVATE is the section where we dig up the last six months of our old ratings and present them on one easy-to-read page, along with a little explanation/breakdown of our rating system. Use this as your buying guide throughout the year and as a reference for those older games that you might have missed (or wish you had).

PLATINUM GAMES	ISSUE	RATING
Final Fantasy VII	September 1997	99%
NFL GameDay 98	October 1997	98%
GOLD GAMES	**ISSUE**	**RATING**
Grand Tour Racing '98	October 1997	96%
Croc: Legend of the Gobbos	October 1997	95%
Treasures of the Deep	October 1997	94%
Ballblazer Champions	May 1997	93%
Hercules	September 1997	93%
Raystorm	September 1997	93%
Time Crisis	October 1997	93%
Need for Speed II	June 1997	92%
Nanotek Warrior	July 1997	92%
Ace Combat 2	August 1997	92%
MLB 98	September 1997	91%
Broken Helix	May 1997	91%
Thunder Truck Rally	June 1997	91%
Machine Hunter	August 1997	91%
Norse by Norsewest	May 1997	90%
Parappa the Rapper	August 1997	90%
Ogre Battle	September 1997	90%
Triple Play 98	June 1997	90%
Felony 11-79	October 1997	90%
SILVER GAMES	**ISSUE**	**RATING**
VR Baseball '97	May 1997	89%
Excalibur 2555 A.D.	August 1997	89%
Clock Tower	October 1997	88%
Herc's Adventures	June 1997	88%
Swagman	June 1997	88%
Dynasty Warriors	August 1997	85%
Warcraft II	September 1997	85%
Wild Arms	May 1997	84%
VMX Racing	May 1997	84%
Goal Storm '97	May 1997	84%
NBA Shoot Out '97	May 1997	84%
Big Bass World Championship	June 1997	84%
Madden NFL 98	October 1997	83%
Bravo Air Race	September 1997	83%
Wing Commander IV	May 1997	83%
Bushido Blade	October 1997	83%
Overblood	June 1997	82%
Mass Destruction	June 1997	82%
Battle Arena Toshinden 3	June 1997	82%
NCAA Football 98	October 1997	82%
Porsche Challenge	October 1997	81%
NBA Hangtime	August 1997	81%
Poy Poy	August 1997	81%
Xevious 3D/G+	June 1997	80%
WCW vs. the World	May 1997	80%
BRONZE GAMES	**ISSUE**	**RATING**
Lethal Enforcers I & II	August 1997	79%
Powerplay 98	September 1997	79%
Tail of the Sun	June 1997	78%
Brahma Force	May 1997	77%
League of Pain	May 1997	77%
Grand Slam Baseball	June 1997	77%
Rush Hour	June 1997	76%
The Divide	May 1997	76%
Battlesport	September 1997	75%
Rally Cross	May 1997	75%
Discworld II	October 1997	73%
All Star Baseball '97	July 1997	71%
TIN GAMES	**ISSUE**	**RATING**
Battlestations	May 1997	69%
The Crow	May 1997	62%
NCAA Final Four	June 1997	22%

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98-100%
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90-97%
"Must buy" games; each carries our editor's seal of approval.

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Good games, but lacking in some area; for fans of that style of game.

70-79%
Mediocre titles that suffer from some serious flaws. Rent — don't buy.

0-69%
Tin games are to be avoided at all costs. Only die-hard gamers would buy these.

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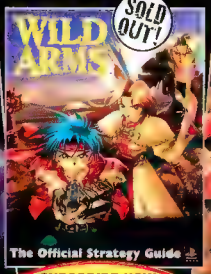

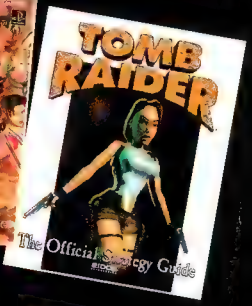

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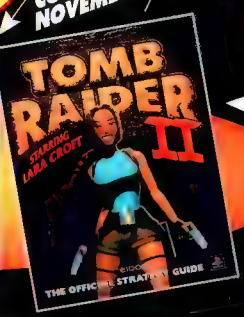

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EIDOS	18, 19, 21, 22, 23, 25
Fox Interactive	51, 53
GT Interactive	26, 27
Lucasarts	106, 107
Midway	15, 29, 63, 69, 73
Playmates	14, 15
Psygnosis	43, 45, 71
Sony	2, 3, 30, 31, 48, 49, 61, 77, 79
THQ	59, 67
Tecmo	108
Westwood Studios	83

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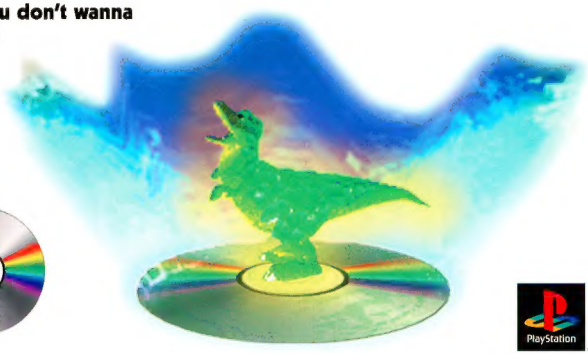

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